Waku Takashi
(Waku)

Isao Kako
(Kako)

Daiichi Yamura
(Daichi)

Masaru Kodaka
(Kodama)

Kanji Yoshikawa
(Kanji)

Yasuhiko Meji
(Meji)

Jun Ushiro
(Ushiro)

Yosuke Kirie
(Kirie)

Nako Nakarai
(Nakarai)

Aiko Tokosumi
(Anko)

Yoko Machi
(Machi)

Chizuru Honda
(Chizu)

Takami Komoda
(Komo)

Maki Ano
(Maki)

Kana Ushiro
(Kana)

Dung Beetle

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CHAPTER 19
CHIZURU HONDA (3)

THE SISTER SHE LOVES AND THE MAN SHE DESPISES. THE GIRL IS TRAPPED BETWEEN THE TWO.

鬼頭莫宏
Kito Mohiro

2
WH... WHAT'S GOING ON?
BIG SISTER WAS IN HIS CAR...?
NO, THAT,
HUH ...?
THAT CAN'T BE.
HUH?!

WH... WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING?
ゴ
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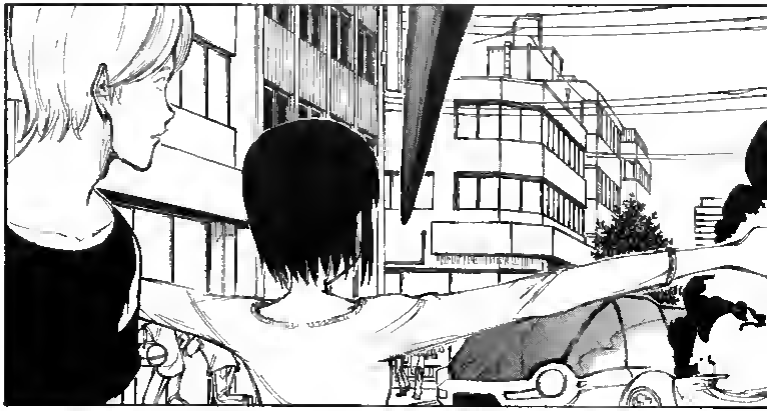
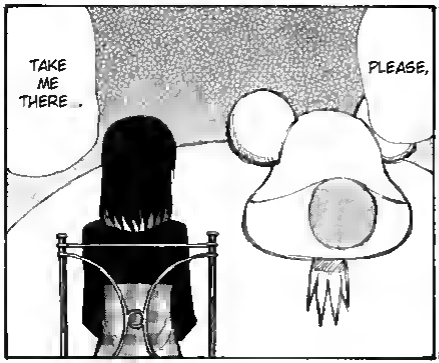
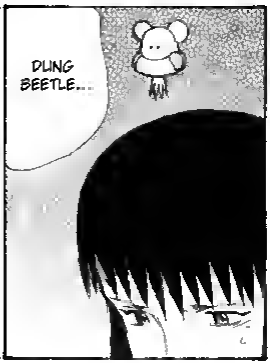
ゴゴゴゴ
4
HUH...
110
110
110

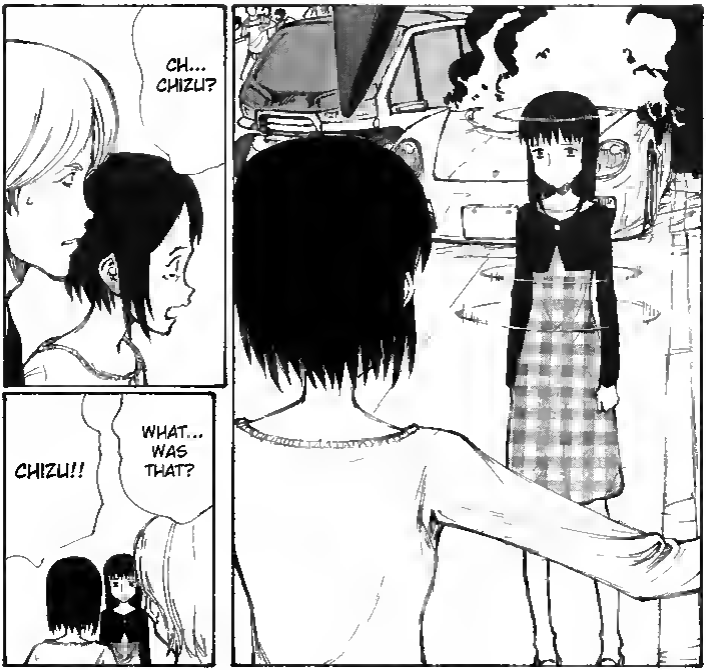
NO!!

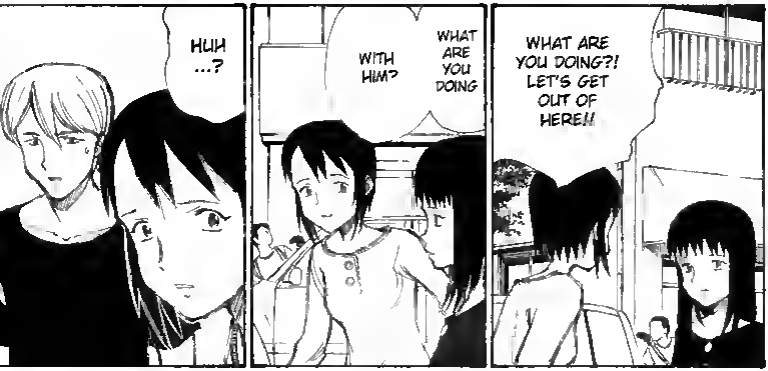


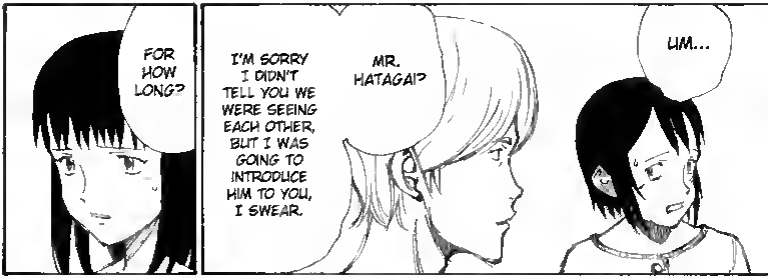
BIG SISTER...


TAKE ME THERE..
PLEASE,

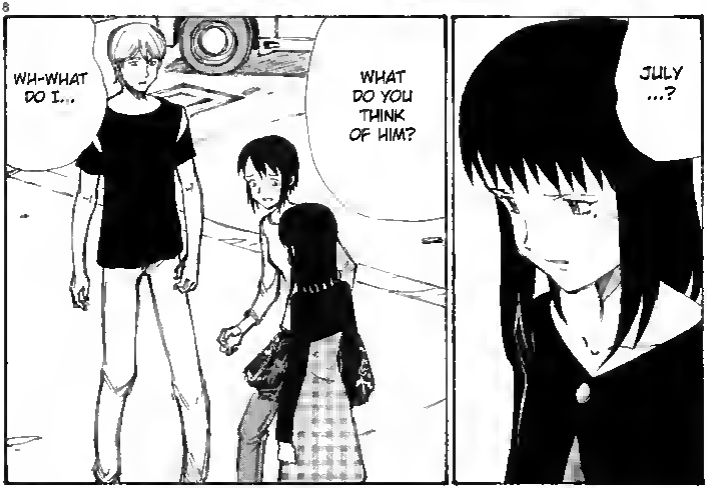

DUNG BEETLE...

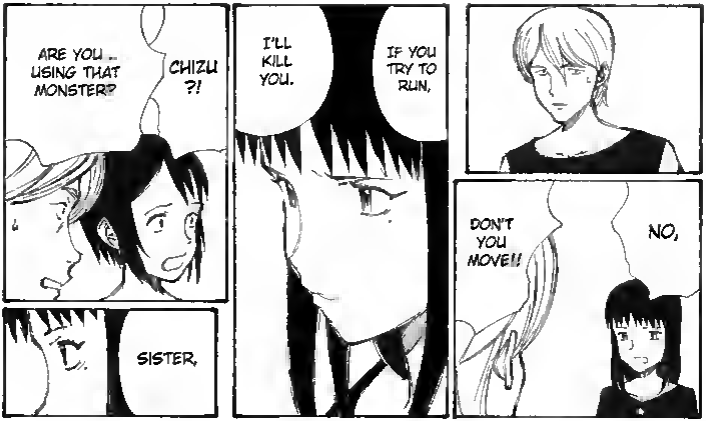

CH... CHIZU?
WHAT... WAS THAT?
CHIZU!!

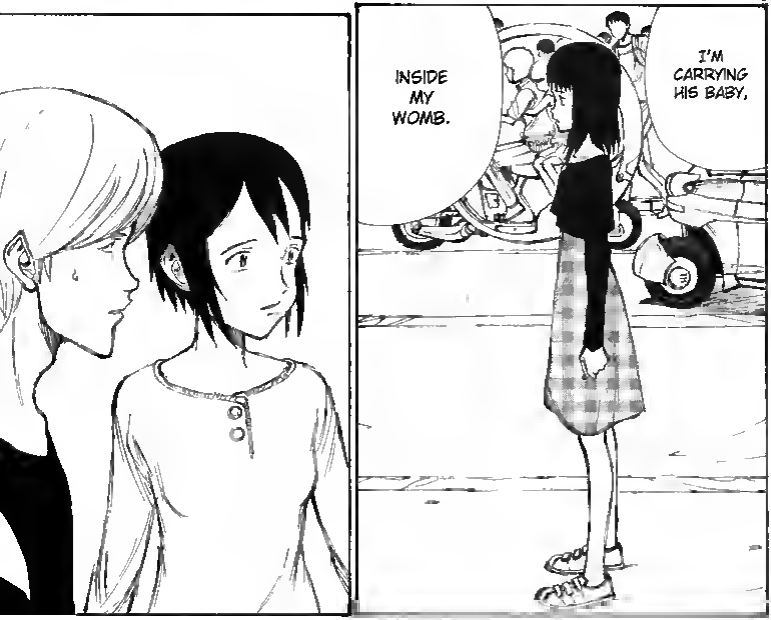

HUH ...?
WITH HIM?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!!


FOR HOW LONG?
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU WE WERE SEEING EACH OTHER, BUT I WAS GOING TO INTRODUCE HIM TO YOU, I SWEAR.
MR. HATAGAI?
UM...

LAST... JULY..
NOW LET'S GO!!
WHEN DID IT START?!
THAT'S NOT IMPOR.


WH-WHAT DO I...
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIM?
JULY ...?


ARE YOU... USING THAT MONSTER?
CHIZU?!
SISTER,
I'LL KILL YOU.
IF YOU TRY TO RUN,
DON'T YOU MOVE!!
NO,


INSIDE MY WOMB.
I'M CARRYING HIS BABY,

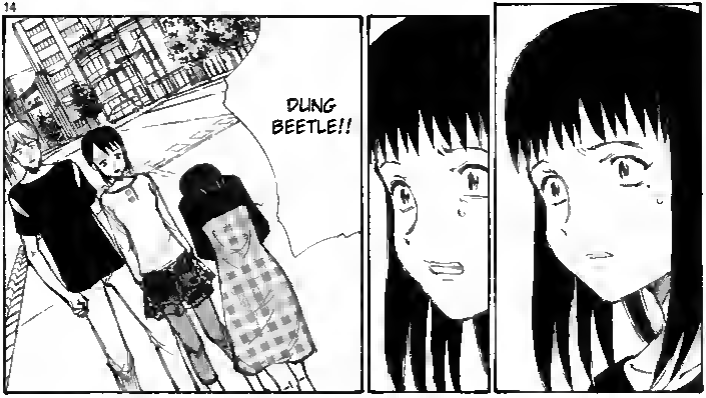
HE'S NOT THE KIND OF PERSON YOU THINK HE IS.
WHA...
AND ESCAPE.
LEAVE HIM BEHIND,
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH HIM?
CHIZU... WHAT ARE YOU...

KILL HIM.
N-NO... YOU DON'T UNDERSTA...
CHIZU!!
YOU CAN'T TALK LIKE THAT.
CHIZU...
BUT,
IF YOU WANT ME TO BREAK UP WITH HIM, I'LL DO IT.
IF YOU'RE HURTING, GIVE SOME OF IT TO ME
BUT I CAN HELP YOU COPE WITH THE PAIN.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS YOU WENT THROUGH.

DON'T EVER TALK...
...ABOUT KILLING PEOPLE.
THE MOMENT YOU HATE SOMEONE,
YOUR OWN LIFE BECOMES MISERABLE
AND THERE'S A PART OF YOU THAT IS AT FAULT FOR YOUR CURRENT SITUATION
I'M SURE YOU MADE A FEW WRONG CHOICES SOMEWHERE ALONG THE ROAD.
B-BIG SISTER ..
IF YOU TRY TO STOP ME..
I'LL KILL...
...YOU, TOO.

OK.
ALL RIGHT.
13
GO AHEAD,
KILL ME.

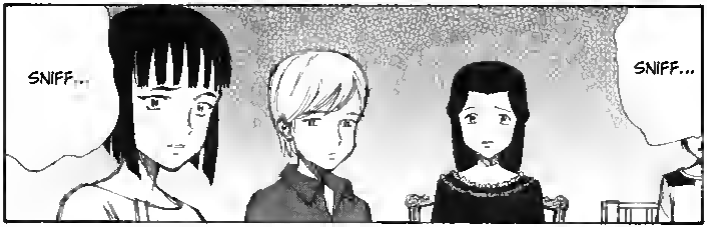
...ALL OF WHAT YOU BEAR.
I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT...

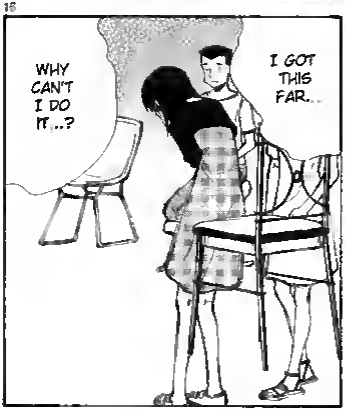

DUNG BEETLE!!

BRING ME BACK...
BRING ME BACK...

BRING ME BACK!!
BRING ME BACK!!

BRI...

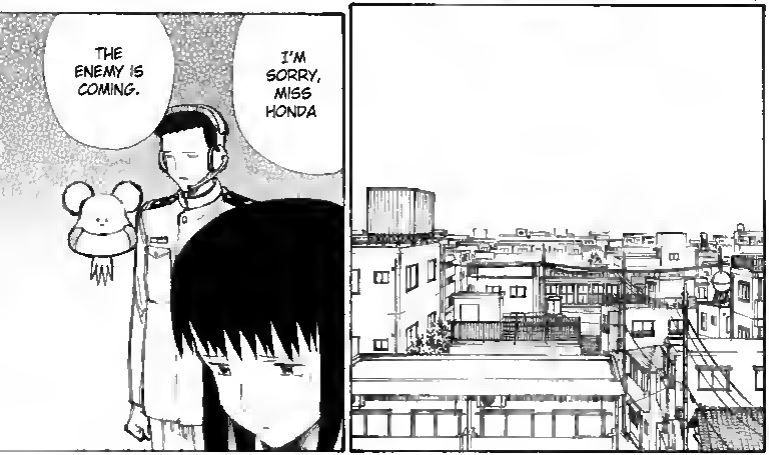

SNIFF...
SNIFF...

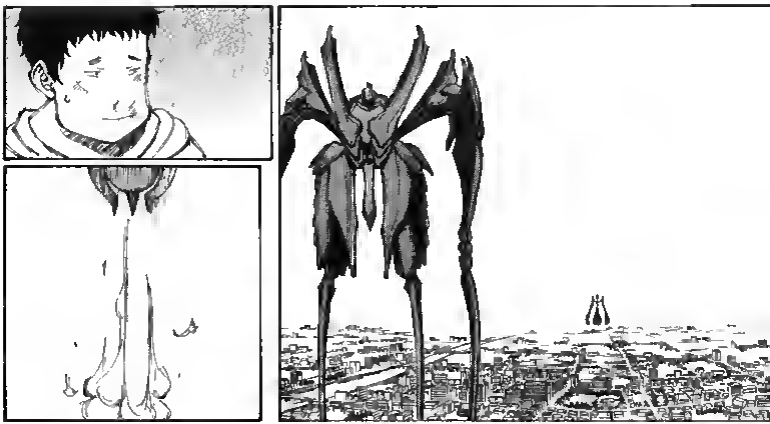

WHY CAN'T I DO IT...?
I GOT THIS FAR...

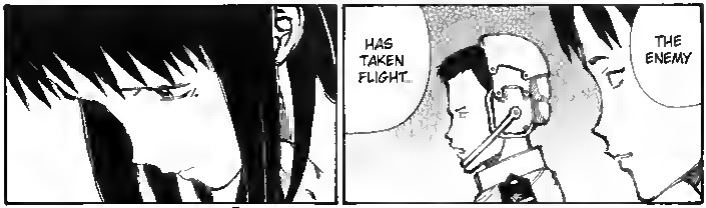
I CAN'T KILL HER...

CHIZU...

WHY AM I...
WHY CAN'T...
WHY...
WHY,

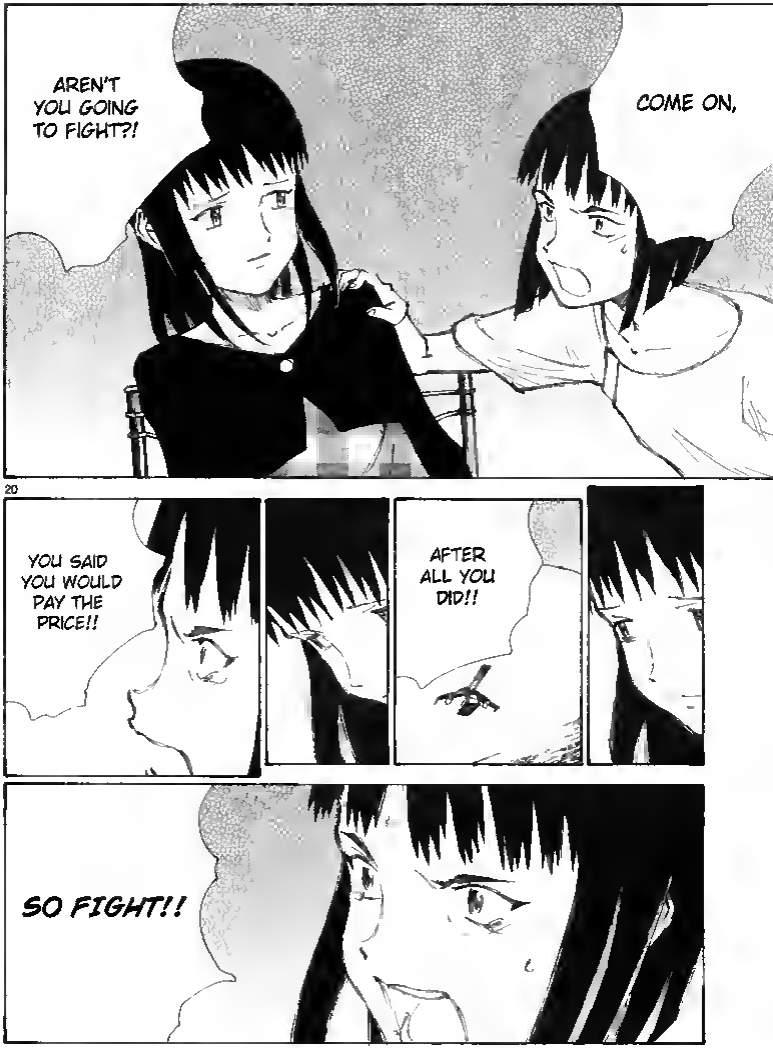

THE ENEMY IS COMING.
I'M SORRY, MISS HONDA




HAS TAKEN FLIGHT...
THE ENEMY

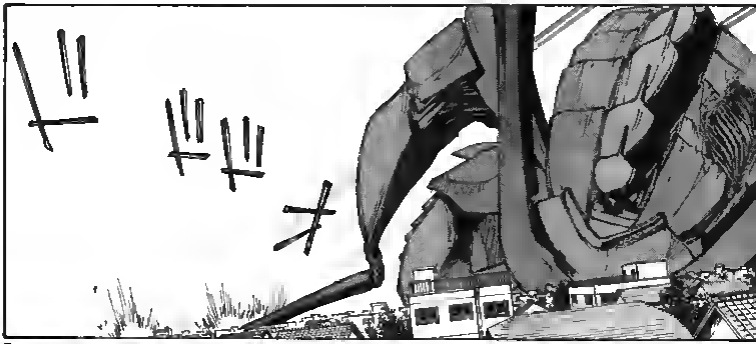
CHIZU!!

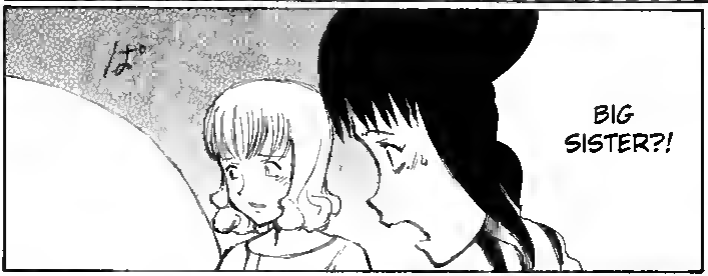
CHIZU!!
THE ENEMY, IS AIRBORNE AGAIN.


AREN'T YOU GOING TO FIGHT?!
COME ON,
20
YOU SAID YOU WOULD PAY THE PRICE!!
AFTER ALL YOU DID!!
SO FIGHT!!

ガキョキョギギ
FIGHT!!
キィ キィ
IT WILL ALL...
ALL BE FOR NOTHING!
IF YOU DON'T...

...THE OTHERS TRIED TO PROTECT.
PROTECT THE PEOPLE...
22




BIG SISTER?!

YOU DAMN-!!

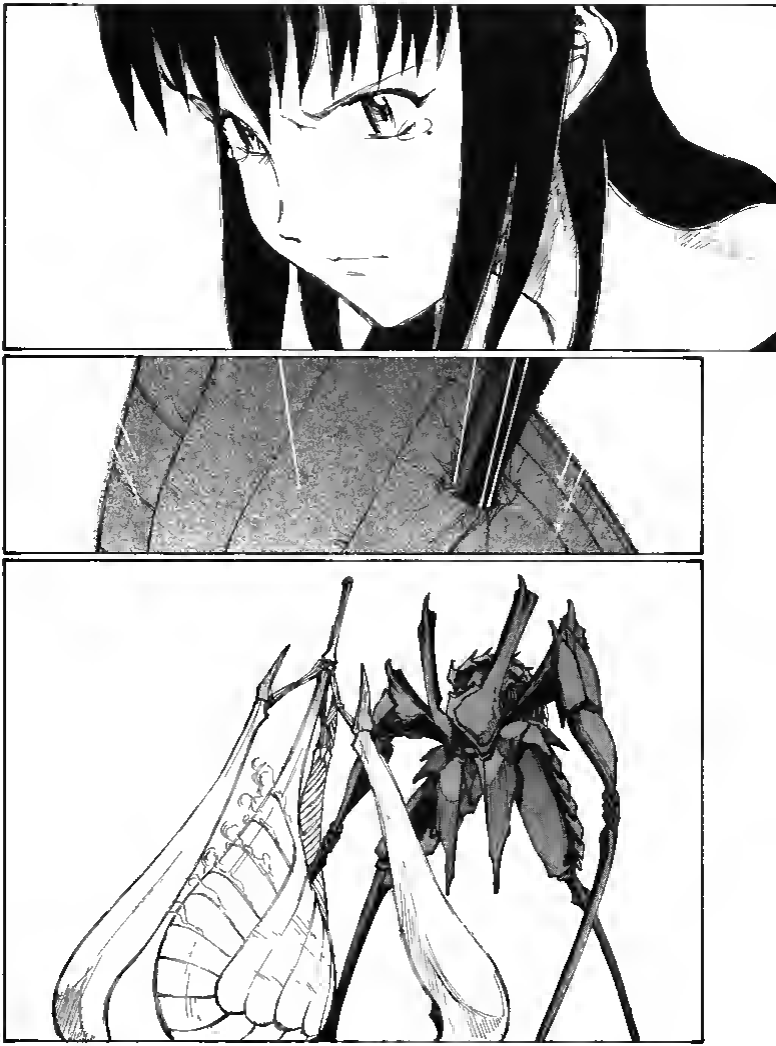
ゴア
COULD *YOU* PAY THE PRICE?
YES.

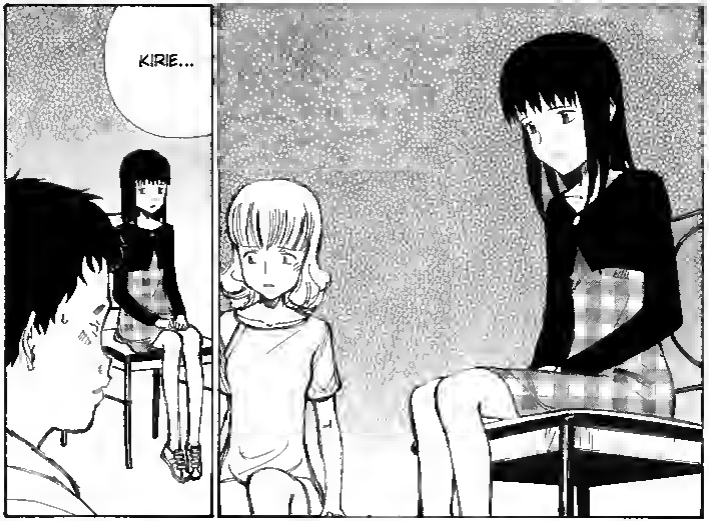
TO THINK SHE WOULD DO SUCH A THING
DOES CHIZU HAVE SOMETHING TO DO..
WITH THAT THING?
THE MONSTER'S KILLED 10,000 PEOPLE
I KNEW,
ALL ABOUT YOU.

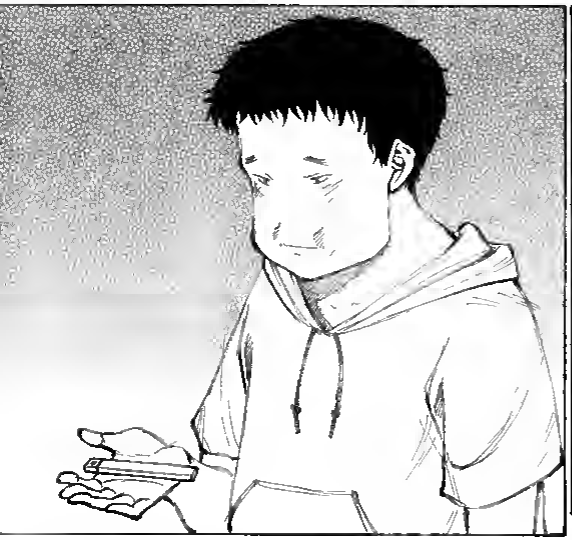
DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYMORE
I JUST,
I'M
WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING?
ALWAYS,
WHAT WAS I TRYING TO DO?
ALWAYS,
AT THE MOST IMPOR-TANT POINTS!!
THAT'S RIGHT,
BUT,
GETTING STOPPED,

GOD,
FOR MY SISTER.
I COULD FIGHT,
AAAH,
THAT SHAPE!!
I COULDN'T KILL HIM.
I HATE,
I'VE GOT TO AT LEAST DO THAT.
I'LL SHOW YOU,
FROM ME!!
ON TOTALLY EQUAL TERMS...
THINKING OF KILLING A PERSON AND PROTECTING A PERSON,
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY,

I GUESS I REALLY AM A TERRIBLE PERSON
I'M GOING TO KILL MY OWN BABY!!
YOU CAN'T STOP ME NOW!!
I GUESS,
THIS IS YOUR WEAK SPOT,
IN THE END,
I CAN'T MATCH UP TO MY SISTER
ISN'T IT?!



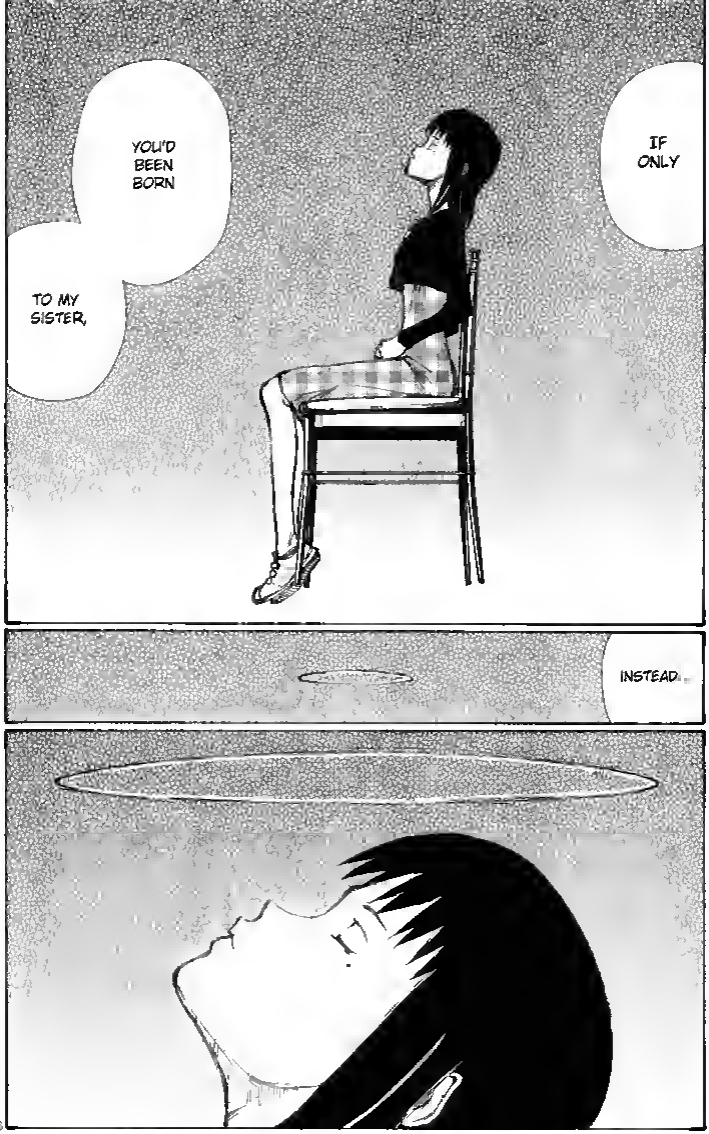

KIRIE...

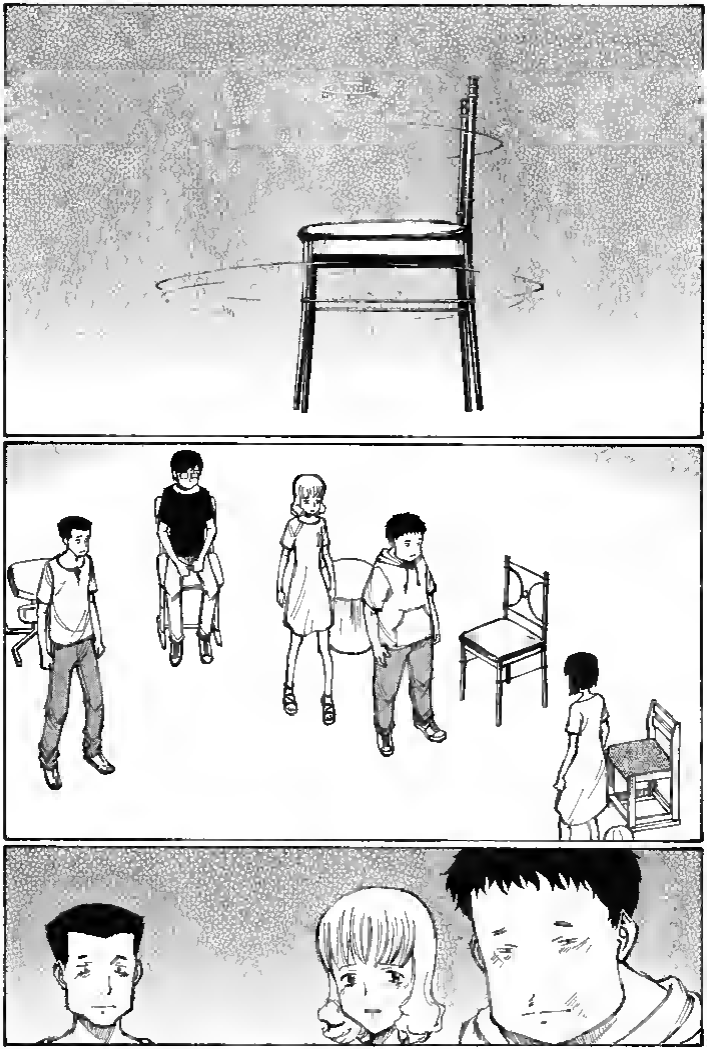


HERE.
TAKE THIS.

TO THE LIGHTS,
PAY CLOSE ATTENTION
ALSO,
CHIZU...
34
ON ZEARTH'S FACE

I HAVE TO GO APOLOGIZE
A TERRIBLE GIRL...
I WAS,
I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE
TO DIE NOW.
I'M GOING
35
I HAVE TO DO THAT, RIGHT? I MEAN, IT CAN'T FIGHT, CAN IT.
DUNG BEETLE?
TOGETHER WITH ME.
I'M GOING TO TAKE THE BABY
AS SOON AS I DIE, PUT ME IN ONE OF ZEARTH'S HIDDEN SPOTS.
DUNG BEETLE


IF ONLY
YOU'D BEEN BORN
TO MY SISTER,
INSTEAD...



SO THAT I DON'T FEEL THE PAIN
MAYBE I'M JUST NUMBING MYSELF.
OR MAYBE NOT...
I'M GETTING USED TO IT.
I FEEL TERRIBLE.
PLEASE CHECK FOR US
THERE MUST BE A SPOTTER OR CHOPPER OUTSIDE
CAN YOU TELL HOW MANY LIGHTS ARE ON ZEARTH'S FACE?
CAPTAIN SEKI,
BUT,
ONE WILL GO OUT, TO REPRESENT CHIZU
THE LIGHTS ON ZEARTH'S FACE CORRESPOND TO OUR LIVES.

AFTER 10 MINUTES,
ANOTHER LIGHT WENT OUT.
DOES THAT MEAN CHIZU'S BABY WAS INCLUDED IN THE CONTRACT...?
THAT'S RIGHT. IT REPRESENTED THE BABY GROWING WITHIN CHIZU.
39
THERE ARE SEVEN LIGHTS LEFT
BUT...
BUT...
HOLD ON,
THERE ARE NINE OF US
KANA DIDN'T JOIN THE CONTRACT, BUT THE NUMBERS STILL DON'T ADD UP
THAT MEANS...
IN OTHER WORDS..

CHAPTER 19/END

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(Waku)

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Maki Ano
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Kana Ushiro
(Kana)

Dung Beetle

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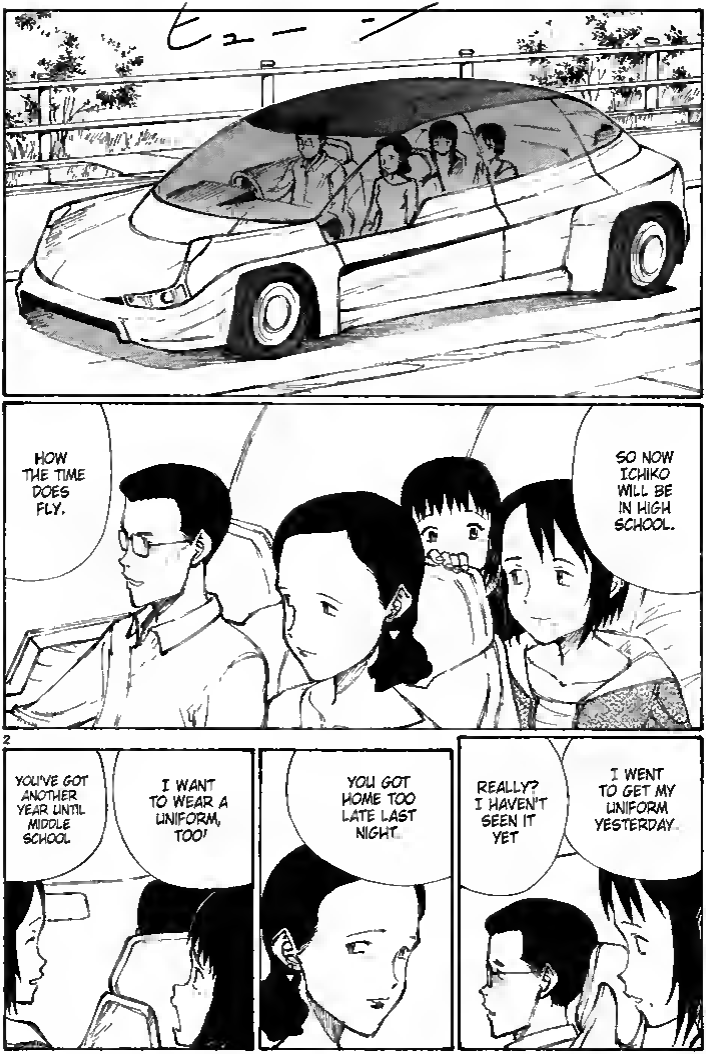
CHAPTER 20
CHIZURU HONDA (4)

A GIRL WHO ADMIRES HER BIG SISTER MORE THAN ANYONE...

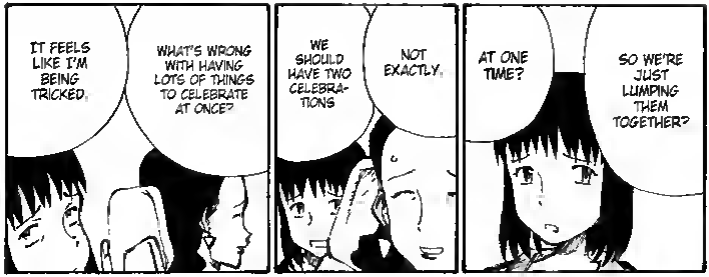
WHERE DID THIS AFFECTION BEGIN...?

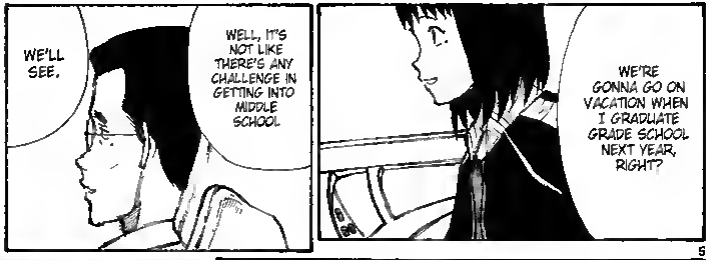
鬼頭莫宏
Kito Mohiro


ヒューン
HOW THE TIME DOES FLY.
SO NOW ICHIKO WILL BE IN HIGH SCHOOL.
2
YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER YEAR UNTIL MIDDLE SCHOOL.
I WANT TO WEAR A UNIFORM, TOO!
YOU GOT HOME TOO LATE LAST NIGHT.
REALLY? I HAVEN'T SEEN IT YET
I WENT TO GET MY UNIFORM YESTERDAY.

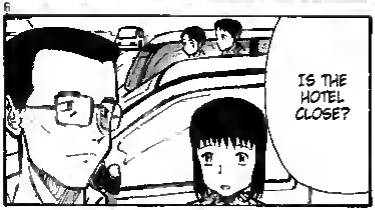
ARE YOU EXCITED FOR MINE, DADDY?
IT'S JUST GOING TO BE THE SAME AS ICHIKO'S WAS.
NO BIGGIE.
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
THAT'S PRECISELY THE WAY TO UNMOTIVATE A CHILD.
I CAN'T HELP IT.
I'M ONLY HUMAN, YOU KNOW.
GEEZ, I NEVER GET MY WAY.
YOU'LL PROBABLY GO TO A DIFFERENT HIGH SCHOOL.
I WANT TO GO TO YOURS.

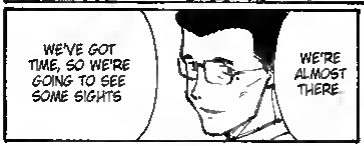
ARE YOU REALLY CAPABLE OF WORKING FOR A LIVING?
HA HA HA, AREN'T I GREAT?
I CAN'T BE A DADDY'S GIRL LOOK AT WHAT I HAVE FOR A DAD.
CHIZURU, YOU REALLY ARE A SISTER'S GIRL.
4
OF COURSE
WHAT? REALLY? DID YOU KNOW THIS, MOM?
I JUST GOT PROMOTED, SO NOW I'M EVEN MORE IMPORTANT
SURE I AM.
キュオオオ
IS TO CELEBRATE BOTH ICHIKO GETTING INTO HIGH SCHOOL AND YOUR FATHER'S PROMOTION.
THIS LITTLE TRIP

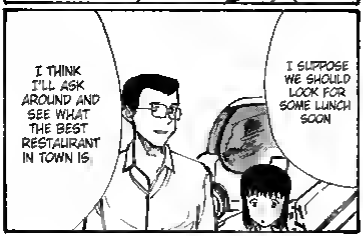

IT FEELS LIKE I'M BEING TRICKED.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HAVING LOTS OF THINGS TO CELEBRATE AT ONCE?
WE SHOULD HAVE TWO CELEBRATIONS
NOT EXACTLY.
AT ONE TIME?
SO WE'RE JUST LUMPING THEM TOGETHER?

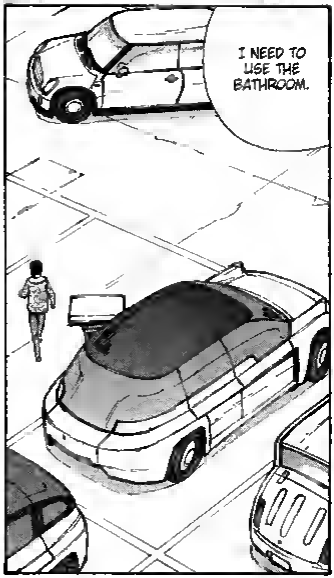

WE'LL SEE.
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE THERE'S ANY CHALLENGE IN GETTING INTO MIDDLE SCHOOL
WE'RE GONNA GO ON VACATION WHEN I GRADUATE GRADE SCHOOL NEXT YEAR, RIGHT?

NO FAIR!!
IT WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY THE TRIP
WHAT? WE AREN'T?!
WE'LL INCLUDE CHIZURU'S CELEBRATION NEXT YEAR IN THIS TRIP.
HOW ABOUT THIS?


IS THE HOTEL CLOSE?


WE'RE ALMOST THERE.
WE'VE GOT TIME, SO WE'RE GOING TO SEE SOME SIGHTS


I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD LOOK FOR SOME LUNCH SOON
I THINK I'LL ASK AROUND AND SEE WHAT THE BEST RESTAURANT IN TOWN IS


I NEED TO USE THE BATHROOM.

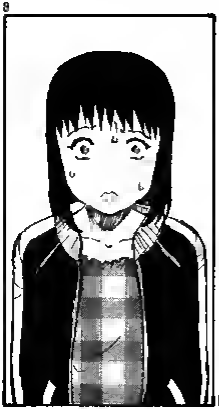
IT WAS PRETTY HARD JUST TO GET THESE ADVANCE TICKETS.
YOU CAN'T BUY AT-THE-GATE ADMISSION DURING SPRING VACATION
AND TOMORROW, WE'RE FINALLY GOING TO TIGER CUB LAND!
WHAT'S WRONG?
HUH?
I WOULDN'T KNOW SOMEONE WHO COULD GET ME THESE
YOU SEE? IF I WASN'T SUCH A GOOD WORKER,
THEY'RE GONE.
THE TICKETS...

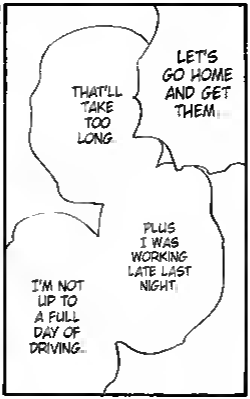
HMMM.

LOOK FOR THEM!!
GO LOOK!!
ARE THEY IN THE CAR?!

AT HOME?
DO YOU SUPPOSE I LEFT THEM...
HOME?!

8

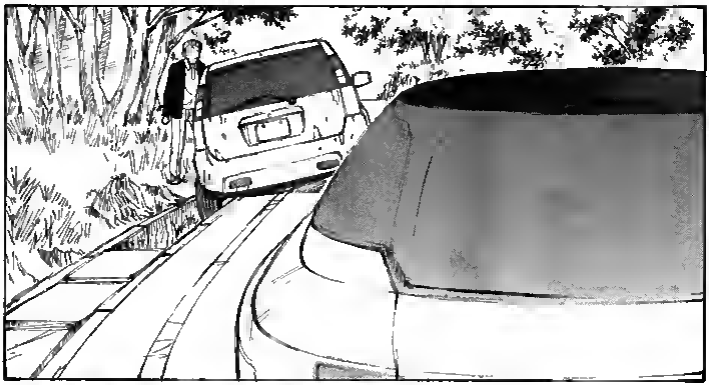



LET'S GO HOME AND GET THEM.
THAT'LL TAKE TOO LONG
PLUS I WAS WORKING LATE LAST NIGHT.
I'M NOT UP TO A FULL DAY OF DRIVING.

W... WH-WH-WHAT SHOULD WE DO?!
WELL, WE DON'T REALLY HAVE A CHOICE.

I'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE TO GO HERE!
I WAS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS!
NO!
WE CAN GO SOMEWHERE ELSE TOMORROW...
NO NO NO!!
OK, CHIZU?
HOW ABOUT NEXT YEAR,
LOOK, HONEY...

VACATIONS SHOULD BE ENJOYABLE
DON'T BE SO ANGRY, CHIZURU.
HUH...
CHIZU.
EVERYONE SCREWS UP SOMETIMES.
OH, NO I'M NOT.
YOU'RE ALWAYS LIKE THIS!!
YOUR FATHER WAS TIRED.



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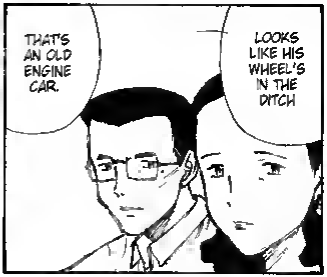

LOOKS LIKE HIS WHEEL'S IN THE DITCH
THAT'S AN OLD ENGINE CAR.

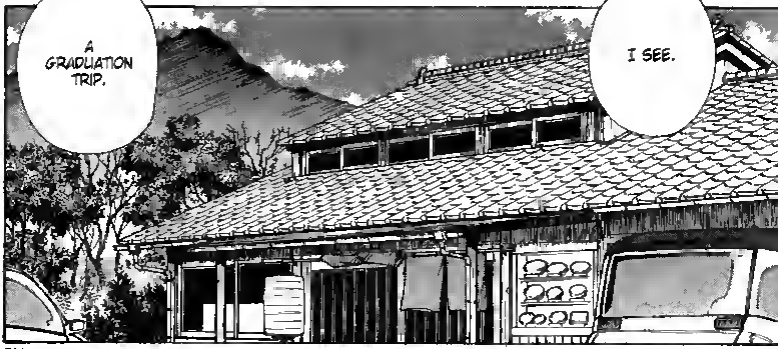
OH, IT WON'T BE SO BAD

WHY NOT?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO.
WE SHOULDN'T GET INVOLVED WITH ANY WEIRDOS

WHAT SHOULD WE DO, DADDY?
WE CAN'T ABANDON A PERSON IN NEED

I'M JUST PLAIN STUCK.
NOBODY'LL STOP TO HELP.
THERE'S JUST NOTHING I CAN DO ON MY OWN.
I WONDER IF PULLING IT WILL HELP.
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
12
BOY, THAT WAS SOME BIND I WAS IN.
YOU DID IT!
WELL, I'LL BE!

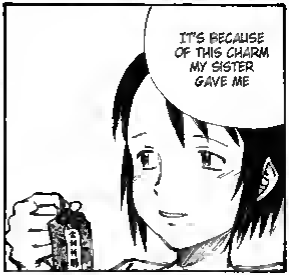
COME ON, MY TREAT.
OH, THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY
CAN I TAKE YOU OUT TO LUNCH?
I'VE GOT TO THANK YOU SOMEHOW.
JUST SHOW US WHERE IT IS
REALLY? WELL, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE BILL
I KNOW THE BEST PLACE TO EAT AROUND HERE
ARE YOU ON VACATION?
JUST FOLLOW ME.
SHALL WE GO?


A GRADUATION TRIP.
I SEE.

NOT LIKE ME AT ALL.
YOU MUST BE SO SMART TO GET INTO A NICE SCHOOL LIKE THAT.

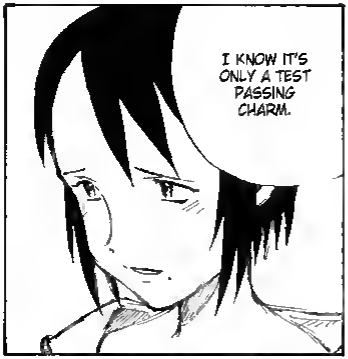
IT WASN'T LUCK. IT WAS BRAINS!

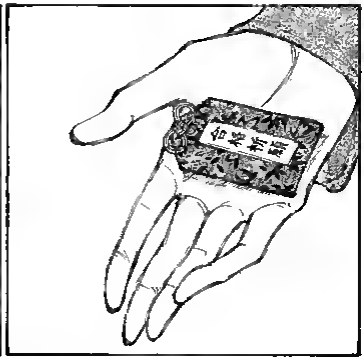
NOTHING EVER SEEMS TO GO RIGHT
I'VE GOT TERRIBLE LUCK MYSELF.
OH, THAT'S LOVELY.


IT'S BECAUSE OF THIS CHARM MY SISTER GAVE ME

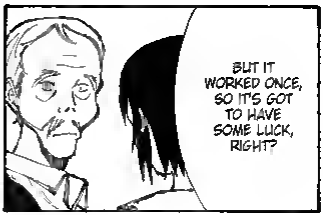
OUR LUCK IS BAD.
JUST TODAY,
SOMEONE TOTALLY LEFT OUR TIGER CUP TICKETS AT HOME!
DAD!!
HA HA HA.
THAT WOULD MAKE ANYONE MAD
15
WE WERE QUITE EXCITED ABOUT IT.
I KNOW!
YOU FOLKS JUST RELAX
I'LL GO PAY AT THE REGISTER.
GOODBYE
WELL, I'VE GOT BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO

16
WHAT?
WH
SIR?
PLEASE TAKE THIS
HERE,

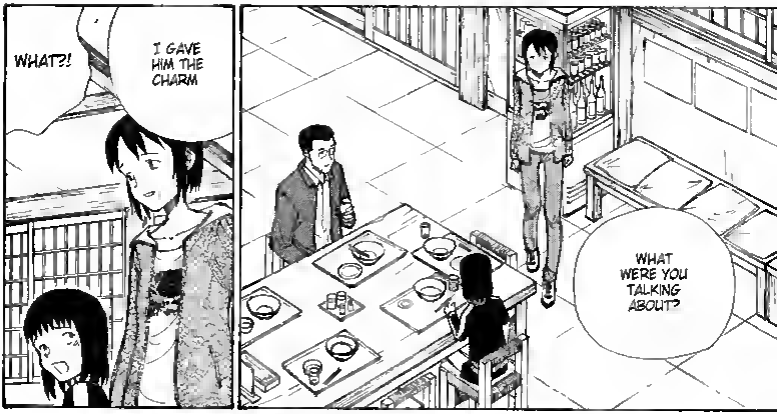

I KNOW IT'S ONLY A TEST PASSING CHARM.

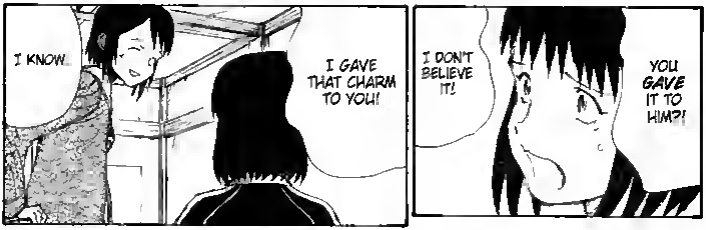


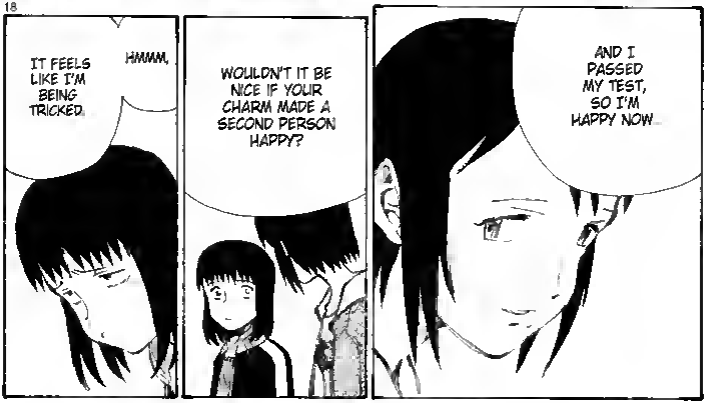
I'VE ALREADY TAKEN MY SHARE OF THE LUCK.
OH, BUT,
I CAN'T. THAT WAS FROM YOUR SISTER


BUT IT WORKED ONCE, SO IT'S GOT TO HAVE SOME LUCK, RIGHT?

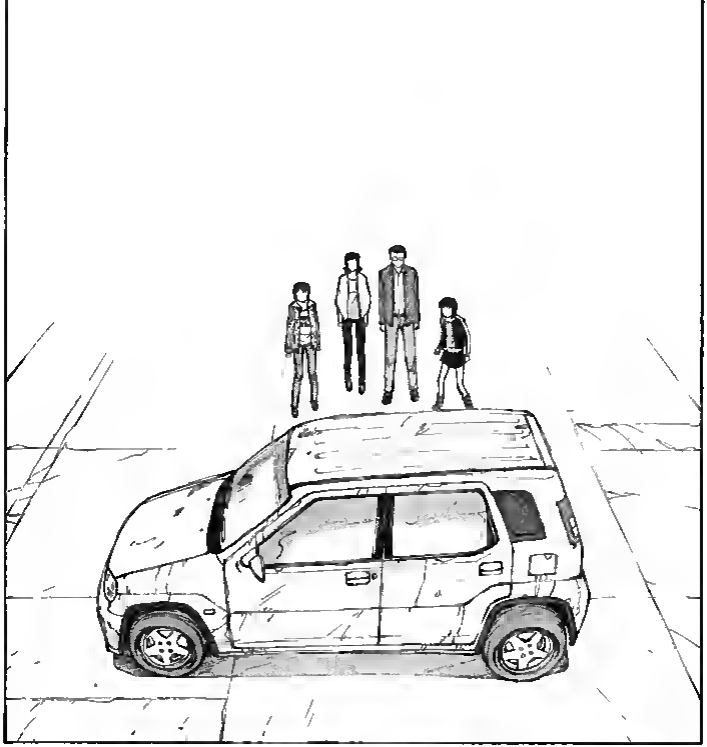
MAYBE NOW YOU WON'T SLIP OFF THE ROAD,
RIGHT?

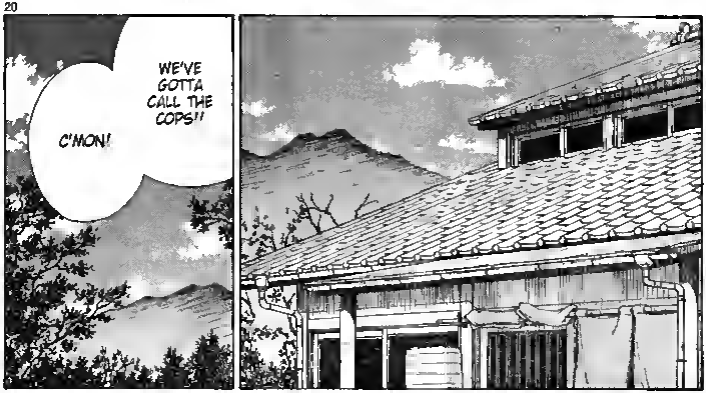

WHAT?!
I GAVE HIM THE CHARM
WHAT WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

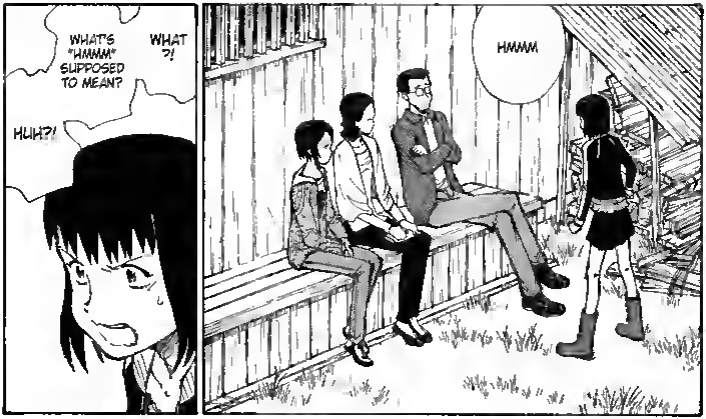

I KNOW.
I GAVE THAT CHARM TO YOU!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
YOU GAVE IT TO HIM?!

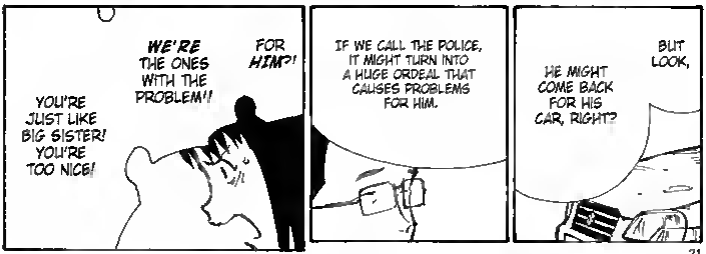

IT FEELS LIKE I'M BEING TRICKED.
HMMM,
WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF YOUR CHARM MADE A SECOND PERSON HAPPY?
AND I PASSED MY TEST, SO I'M HAPPY NOW.

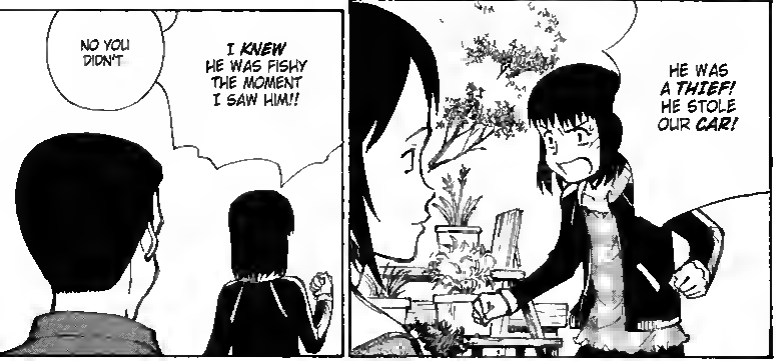
DON'T YOU THINK?
IT'S A NICE RESTAURANT
BUT I LIKE THIS PLACE
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ACT WITH PEOPLE LIKE HIM.
AND YOU TALKED WITH HIM THE MOST
HE WAS A WEIRD MAN
19
IS THAT HIS CAR?
HUH?
THANK YOU FOR COMING!
I THOUGHT IT WAS NEXT TO HIS CAR..
WHERE'S OUR CAR?
MY BRIEF-CASE..




C'MON!
WE'VE GOTTA CALL THE COPS!!


WHAT'S "HMMM" SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
WHAT?!
HUH?!
HMMM

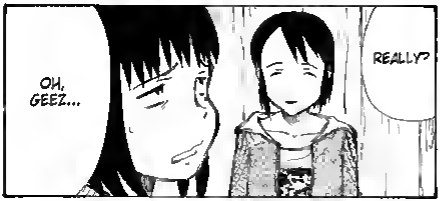

YOU'RE JUST LIKE BIG SISTER! YOU'RE TOO NICE!
WE'RE THE ONES WITH THE PROBLEM!!
FOR HIM?!
IF WE CALL THE POLICE, IT MIGHT TURN INTO A HUGE ORDEAL THAT CAUSES PROBLEMS FOR HIM.
HE MIGHT COME BACK FOR HIS CAR, RIGHT?
BUT LOOK,


NO YOU DIDN'T
I KNEW HE WAS FISHY THE MOMENT I SAW HIM!!
HE WAS A THIEF! HE STOLE OUR CAR!

THIS IS YOUR FAULT FOR BEING SO LAZY AND DUMB!!

C'MON,
WE CAN WAIT A BIT.

RIGHT, WE ALREADY LOST IT
THERE'S NOTHING TO LOSE BY SITTING HERE AND WAITING
CHIZU,

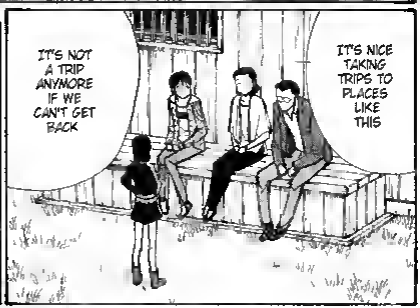

OH, GEEZ...
REALLY?

IT'S NOT RUINED IF YOU DON'T THINK IT IS.
CHIZU,

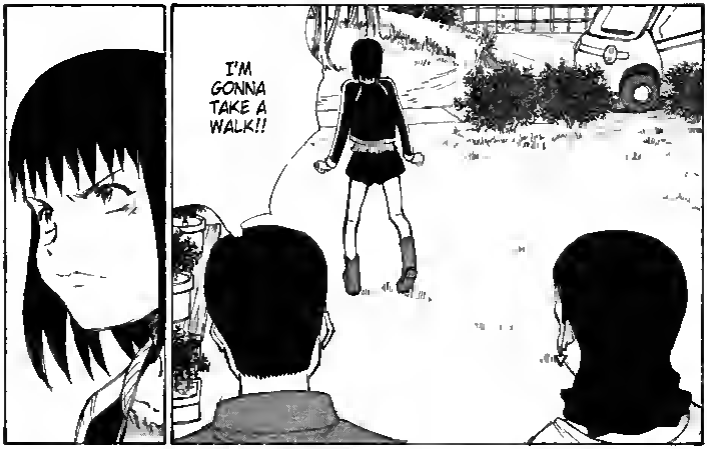
EVIL PEOPLE ARE GOING TO KEEP TRICKING YOU, AND YOUR LIFE WILL BE RUINED.
IF YOU KEEP ACTING LIKE THIS,

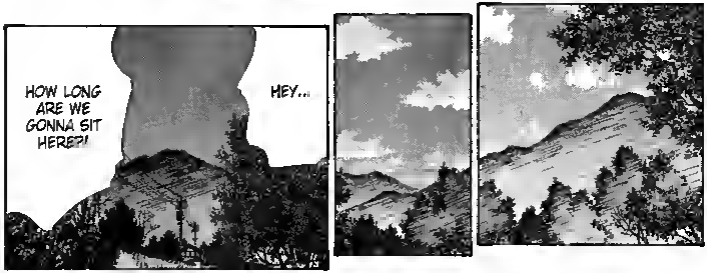
SEE, LOOK
ISN'T THIS PRETTY?

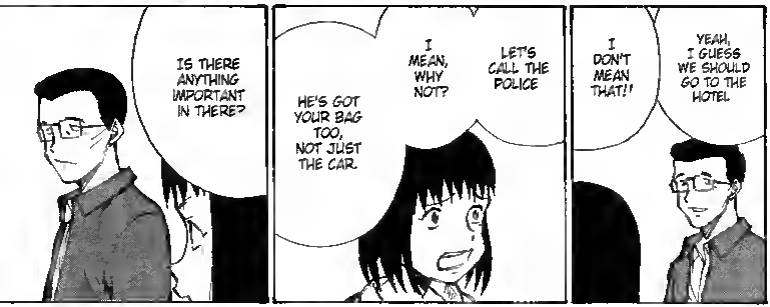
THE RUSHING AROUND ISN'T WHAT'S FUN ABOUT A TRIP

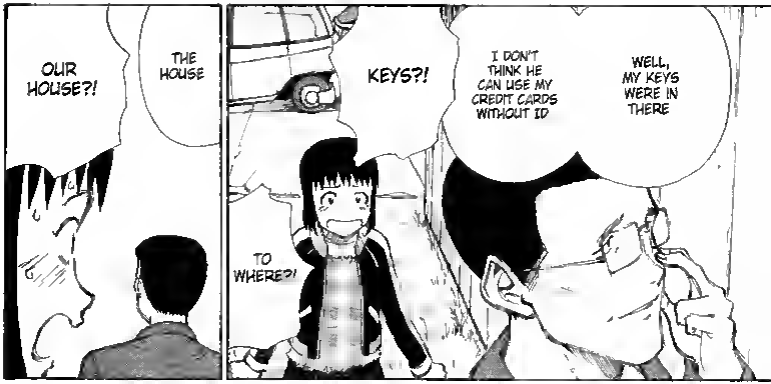

IT'S NOT A TRIP ANYMORE IF WE CAN'T GET BACK
IT'S NICE TAKING TRIPS TO PLACES LIKE THIS

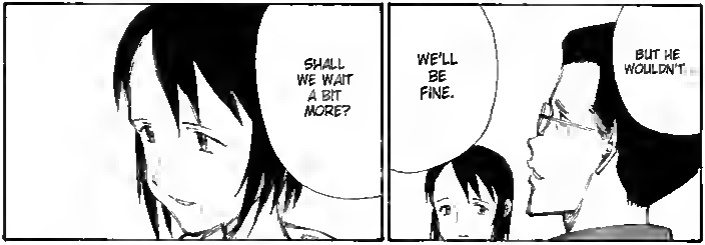
WHY IS ALL OF MY FAMILY SO RETARDED?!
ACTUALLY,
YOUR DAD USED TO BE A LOT MORE PRICKLY.
I WAS?
YES, JUST LIKE CHIZURU IS NOW.
IS THAT TRUE?
THEN I MUST HAVE WISED UP WHEN I MET YOU, DEAR

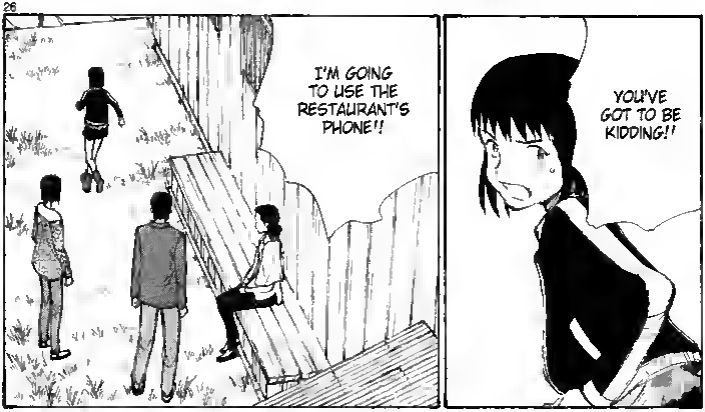

I'M GONNA TAKE A WALK!!

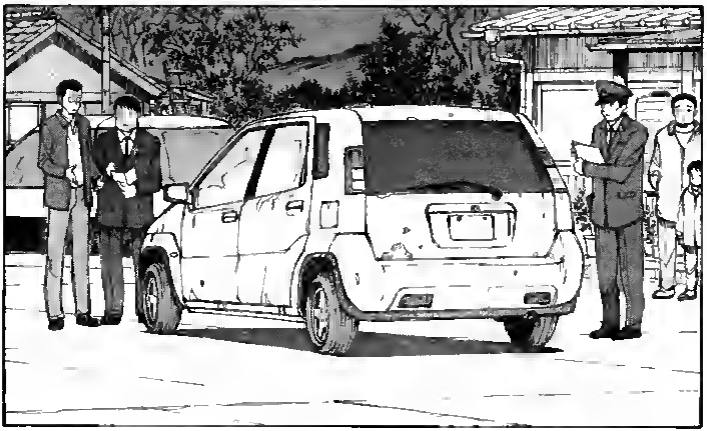

HOW LONG ARE WE GONNA SIT HERE?!
HEY...


IS THERE ANYTHING IMPORTANT IN THERE?
HE'S GOT YOUR BAG TOO, NOT JUST THE CAR.
I MEAN, WHY NOT?
LET'S CALL THE POLICE
I DON'T MEAN THAT!!
YEAH, I GUESS WE SHOULD GO TO THE HOTEL

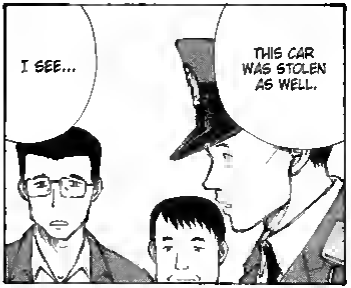

OUR HOUSE?!
THE HOUSE
KEYS?!
I DON'T THINK HE CAN USE MY CREDIT CARDS WITHOUT ID
WELL, MY KEYS WERE IN THERE
TO WHERE?!

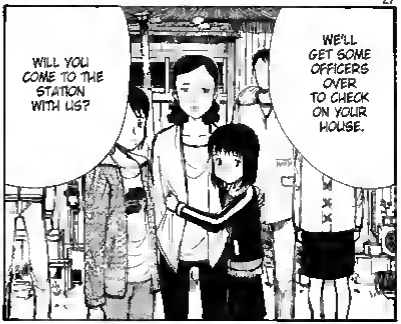

SHALL WE WAIT A BIT MORE?
WE'LL BE FINE.
BUT HE WOULDN'T.

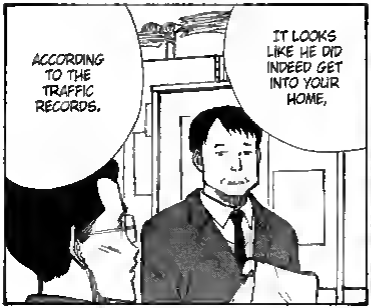

I'M GOING TO USE THE RESTAURANT'S PHONE!!
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!!

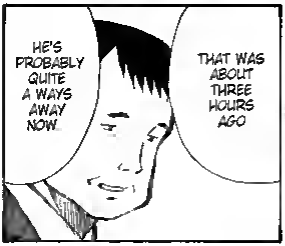


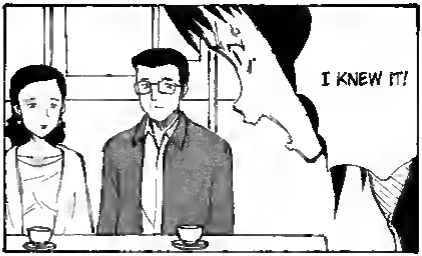
HE'S WANTED FOR THIEVERY YOU KNOW.
YOU REALLY OUGHT TO HAVE REPORTED THIS IMMEDIATELY
ALREADY DONE IT SEVERAL TIMES

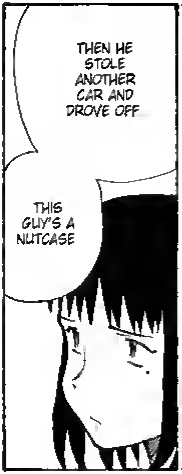

I SEE...
THIS CAR WAS STOLEN AS WELL.


WILL YOU COME TO THE STATION WITH US?
WE'LL GET SOME OFFICERS OVER TO CHECK ON YOUR HOUSE.


ACCORDING TO THE TRAFFIC RECORDS,
IT LOOKS LIKE HE DID INDEED GET INTO YOUR HOME,

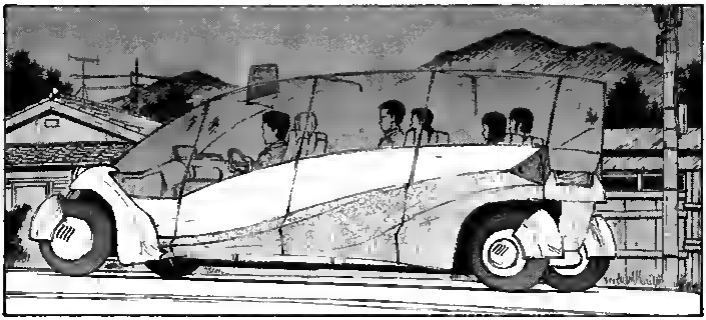

HE'S PROBABLY QUITE A WAYS AWAY NOW.
THAT WAS ABOUT THREE HOURS AGO


I KNEW IT!

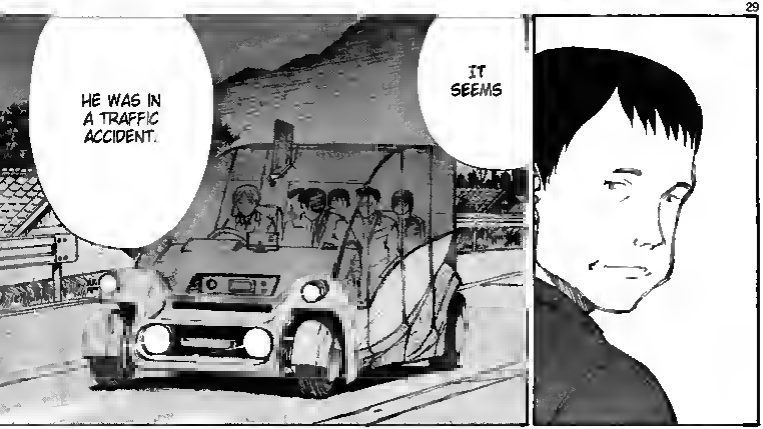

THEN HE STOLE ANOTHER CAR AND DROVE OFF.
THIS GUY'S A NUTCASE

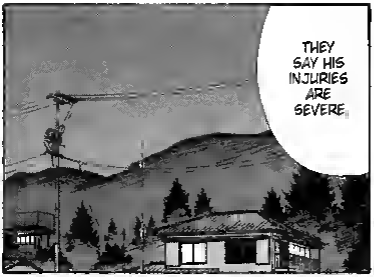
WHY?
DID HE COME ALL THE WAY BACK?
IT WAS DISCARDED NOT FAR FROM THAT RESTAURANT.

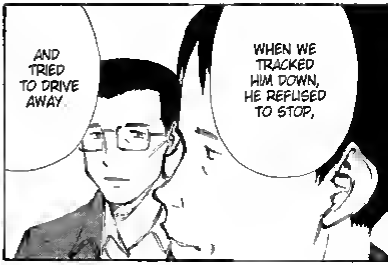
WE'VE FOUND THE CAR!
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD RETURN HOME AND...



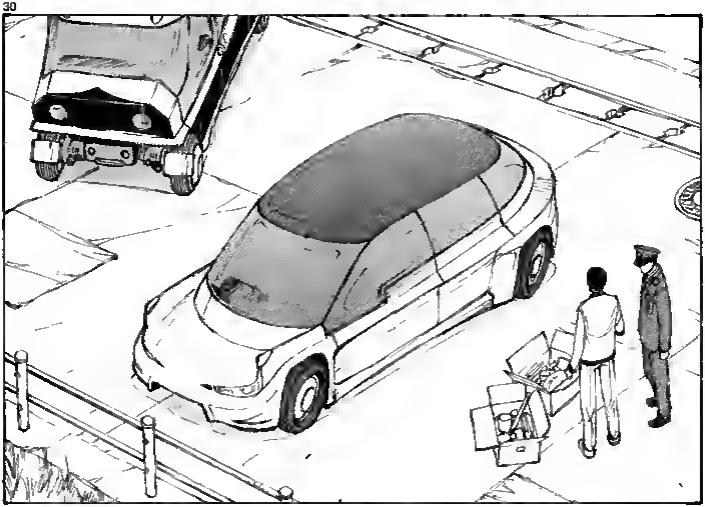
UH-HUH...
YES,
WHAT..?
ピ!
カチャ

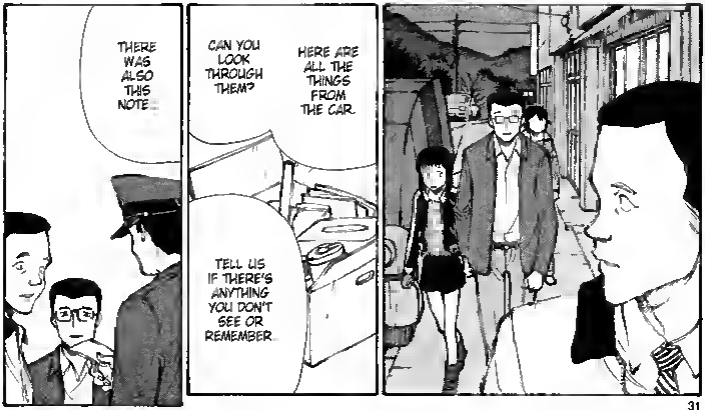

HE WAS IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT.
IT SEEMS

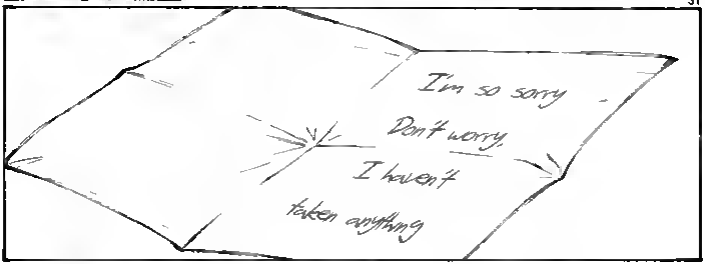

THEY SAY HIS INJURIES ARE SEVERE.

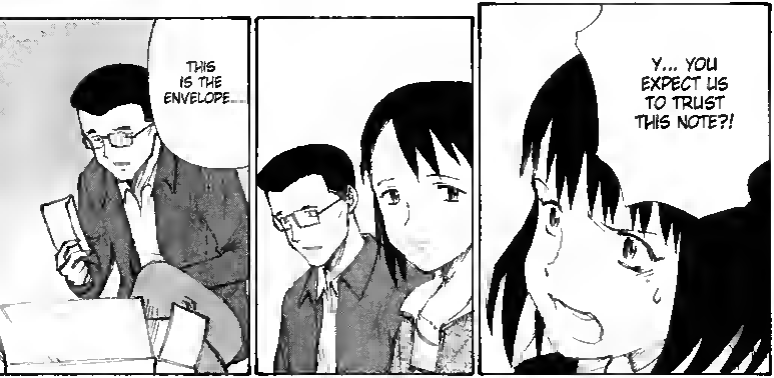

WHEN WE TRACKED HIM DOWN, HE REFUSED TO STOP,
AND TRIED TO DRIVE AWAY.

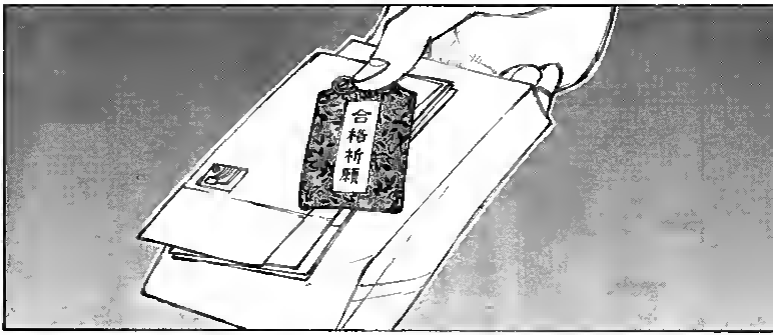
HE GOT WHAT WAS COMING TO HIM.

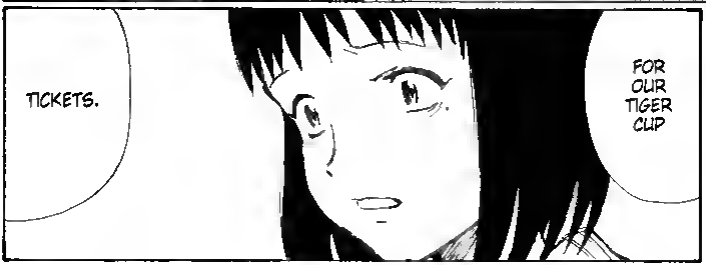


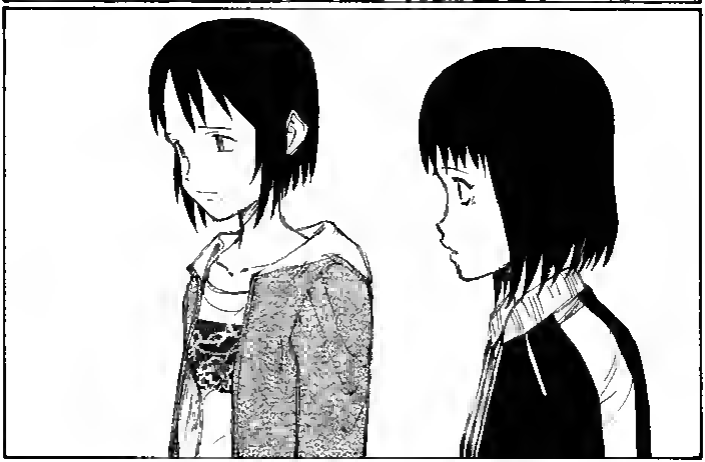

THERE WAS ALSO THIS NOTE...
CAN YOU LOOK THROUGH THEM?
HERE ARE ALL THE THINGS FROM THE CAR.
TELL US IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU DON'T SEE OR REMEMBER.

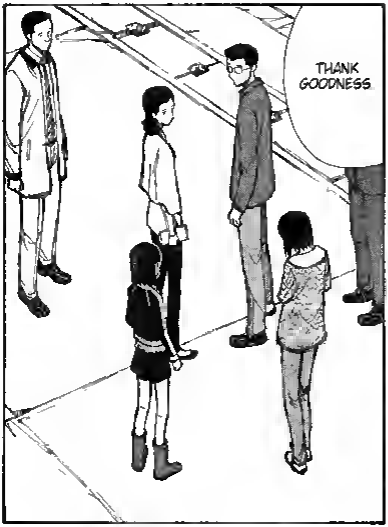

I'm so sorry
Don't worry.
I haven't
taken anything

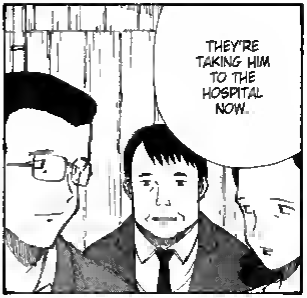

THIS IS THE ENVELOPE...
Y... YOU EXPECT US TO TRUST THIS NOTE?!

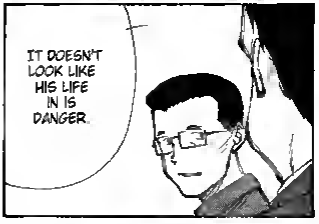

合格祈願

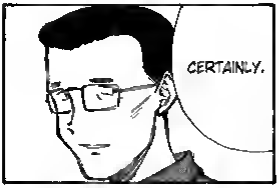

TICKETS.
FOR OUR TIGER CUP

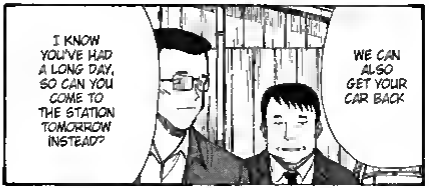



THANK GOODNESS.


THEY'RE TAKING HIM TO THE HOSPITAL NOW.


IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HIS LIFE IN IS DANGER.

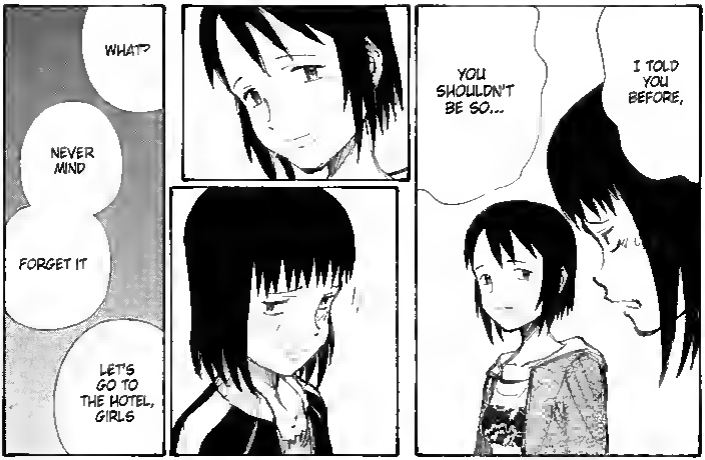

CERTAINLY.

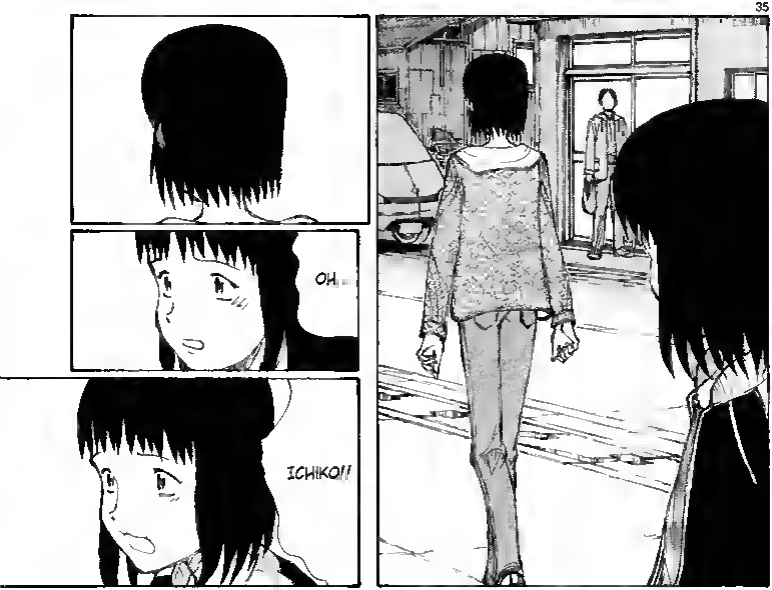

I KNOW YOU'VE HAD A LONG DAY, SO CAN YOU COME TO THE STATION TOMORROW INSTEAD?
WE CAN ALSO GET YOUR CAR BACK

MEANIE.

LOOKS LIKE WE WON'T BE AT TIGER CUP TOMORROW, EITHER.
YOU BUMMED OUT, CHIZU!?

ACK...
AND WE COULD HAVE GONE TO TIGER CUP TOMORROW.
PROBABLY NOT.
SO,
34
HIS CRIMES WILL NEVER GO AWAY,
BUT THEY CAN BE FORGIVEN.
YOU SHOULDN'T HATE HIM FOR IT, THOUGH
BUT WHAT HE DID WAS WRONG, AND IT'S HIS FAULT THIS HAPPENED TO HIM.
IF I HADN'T CALLED THE POLICE
WOULD HE NOT HAVE BEEN HURT?
SO THAT HE GETS BETTER SOON.
LET'S GIVE HIM THAT CHARM.
SO THIS TIME,


WHAT?
NEVER MIND
FORGET IT
LET'S GO TO THE HOTEL, GIRLS
I TOLD YOU BEFORE,
YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO...


OH...
ICHIKO!!

CHAPTER 20/END

Waku Takashi
(Waku)

Isao Kako
(Kako)

Daiichi Yamura
(Daichi)

Masaru Kodaka
(Kodama)

Kanji Yoshikawa
(Kanji)

Yasuhiko Meji
(Meji)

Jun Ushiro
(Ushiro)

Yosuke Kirie
(Kirie)

Nako Nakarai
(Nakarai)

Aiko Tokosumi
(Anko)

Yoko Machi
(Machi)

Chizuru Honda
(Chizu)

Takami Komoda
(Komo)

Maki Ano
(Maki)

Kana Ushiro
(Kana)

Dung Beetle

ぼくらの

CHAPTER 21
KUNIHIKO MOJI (1)

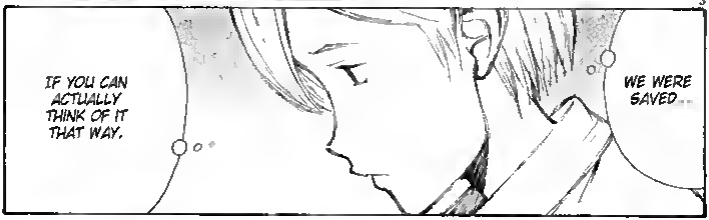
THE COOL-HEADED BOY WHO DOESN'T TALK ABOUT HIMSELF.

WHAT FEELINGS LIE HIDDEN BENEATH HIS SURFACE...?

鬼頭
Kito Mohiro
莫宏

WE LEARNED SOMETHING FROM KAKO... FROM KAKO AND CHIZU'S BATTLE
FOUR DAYS HAVE PASSED.
ORIGINALLY, WE SHOULD HAVE HAD THE SAME NUMBER AS THEM.
THERE ARE NOW
NINE ENEMIES REMAINING
WE'RE SHORT TWO PILOTS FOR OUR BATTLES WITH THE ENEMY.
AT THIS RATE,
2
WHICH MEANS WE'RE SHORT TWO PILOTS.
AND THE BABY INSIDE CHIZU'S WOMB WAS INCLUDED IN THE CONTRACT,
BUT KAKO DIED BEFORE HE COULD BEAT HIS OPPONENT,

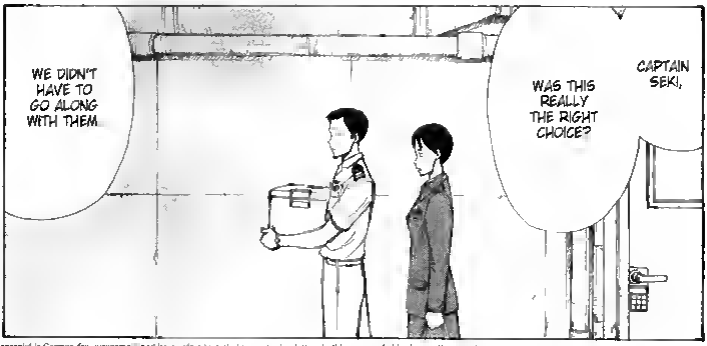
OF COURSE, WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT CHIZU'S BABY COULD NOT POSSIBLY FIGHT ON ITS OWN,
YOU COULD SAY WE WERE DOWN BY ONE FROM THE START.
IF THE BABY'S TURN HAD COME BEFORE CHIZU'S,
WE WOULD HAVE LOST FOR CERTAIN.


WE WERE SAVED...
IF YOU CAN ACTUALLY THINK OF IT THAT WAY.

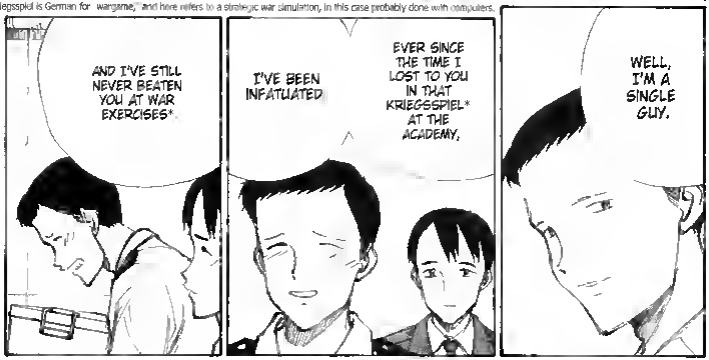
AND WE'VE LEARNED ONE MORE THING.
AMONG OUR GROUP,
SOMEONE ELSE BESIDES KANA ISN'T BOUND TO THE CONTRACT.
IN OTHER WORDS, ONE OF US WILL NOT DIE.

THE CONTRACT
IS COMPLETE.
YOU CAN'T TAKE IT BACK NOW
NO REGRETS
THE TWO OF YOU WILL BE LOADED IN THE MAGAZINE NEXT TIME OUT
IT'S A PRETTY FREAK OCCURRENCE.

YOU'LL GET YOUR SEATS
ONCE THE LITTLE BRATS HAVE BEEN CLEANED UP,
LIKE HONDA'S BABY FOR INSTANCE
BUT SOMETIMES YA GET PEOPLE WHO DIE BEFORE THEIR CHANCE TO FIGHT
PLEASE TAKE US TO YOKOTA BASE
ALL RIGHT, MR DUNG BEETLE,



* Kriegsspiel is German for "wargame," and here refers to a strategic war simulation, in this case probably done with computers.


AND I'VE STILL NEVER BEATEN YOU AT WAR EXERCISES*.
I'VE BEEN INFATUATED
EVER SINCE THE TIME I LOST TO YOU IN THAT KRIEGSSPIEL* AT THE ACADEMY,
WELL, I'M A SINGLE GUY.

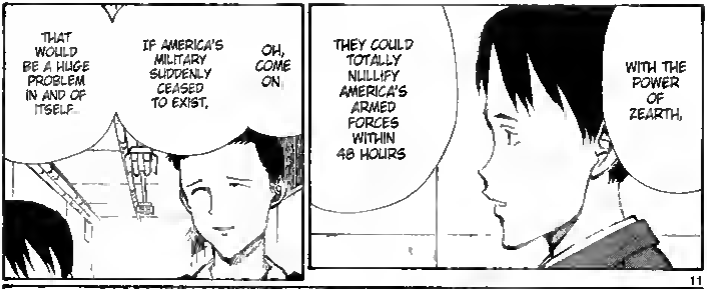
* War exercises are similar to simulated wargames, but actually involve real soldiers carrying out operations.

I HAVEN'T TOLD THEM ABOUT ANY OF THIS
HUH?
YOU HAVE A HUSBAND AND A DAUGHTER...
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, ARE YOU OK WITH THIS?
I HAVEN'T TOLD THEM.

I DIDN'T THINK I WOULD BE LIVING LONG WHEN I JOINED THE MILITARY.
I'M JUST FINE.
DO YOU THINK THEY WOULD FORGIVE ME?
IF I DID,
I DON'T HAVE TO DIE.
WELL, LOOK AT ME,
AND I THINK,
I LOOK AT THOSE KIDS,
I WOULDN'T BE THE KIND OF MOTHER MY DAUGHTER COULD BE PROUD OF.
I JUST THINK THAT IF I COULDN'T MAKE MYSELF SIGN THAT CONTRACT,
TO SOMEONE WHO IS FATED TO DIE SOON
ANYTHING THAT I SAY WILL MEAN NOTHING
IT'S NOT THAT I'VE GOTTEN DESPERATE.

I WONDER WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH BEING A SOLDIER
I FEEL THE SAME WAY.
OF COURSE, ENDING MY LIFE EARLY OVER IT ALL IS A PRETTY LAUGHABLE THING TO DO.
IT'S SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.
AS LONG AS ONE OF THEM WILL SURVIVE,
BUT I DON'T EVEN REALLY WANT TO INTERROGATE THEM OVER WHO IT IS
ISN'T BOUND TO THE CONTRACT,
APPARENTLY ONE OF THOSE KIDS
IT'S ALMOST A GIVEN THAT THE INFO WILL LEAK OUTSIDE.
AND IF YOU TELL THE ENTIRE SERVICE ABOUT IT,
B2
B
IT DOESN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP THE CHILDREN,
NO, THAT WOULD NEVER WORK.
APPARENTLY THE BRASS IS THINKING ABOUT CALLING FOR VOLUNTEERS TO RIDE IN ZEARTH

THEY CAN'T POSSIBLY SIT STILL
IF THEY LEARN THE JAPANESE ARMY IS CONTROLLING THAT,
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING AT AMERICA'S BASE IN GUAM.
THE NAVAL FORCE HAS BEEN ORDERED TO WATCH THE OGASAWARA DEFENSE LINE.
SINCE THE HINO REPORT...
THIS COULD BE THE BIGGEST CRISIS IN JAPANESE-AMERICAN RELATIONS
10
NOT THAT I THINK THEY'RE THAT RASH, BUT...
THEY'LL START A WAR WITH AMERICA FOR CERTAIN.
IF THE CHINESE ARMY GETS HOLD OF ZEARTH,
THEY MIGHT DEMAND DISCLOSURE OF ZEARTH THROUGH THE SINO-JAPANESE SECURITY TREATY.
CHINA'S A PROBLEM, TOO.


THAT WOULD BE A HUGE PROBLEM IN AND OF ITSELF...
IF AMERICA'S MILITARY SUDDENLY CEASED TO EXIST,
OH, COME ON.
THEY COULD TOTALLY NULLIFY AMERICA'S ARMED FORCES WITHIN 48 HOURS
WITH THE POWER OF ZEARTH,

AFTER THE HINO REPORT.
MY FATHER DIED IN THE FIGHT TO TAKE BACK NAHA BASE,

I HAVE FRIENDS IN THE AMERICAN ARMY, YOU KNOW.
HARDLY

THAT'S WHY YOU SIGNED?

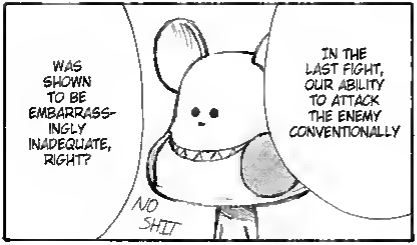
I WAS 4.

SORRY ABOUT THE WAIT
YOU MUST BE HUNGRY
AND HERE WE JUST YANKED YOU AWAY RIGHT AFTER SCHOOL
IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE FOOD, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO WHILE WE CONDUCT THE BRIEFING.

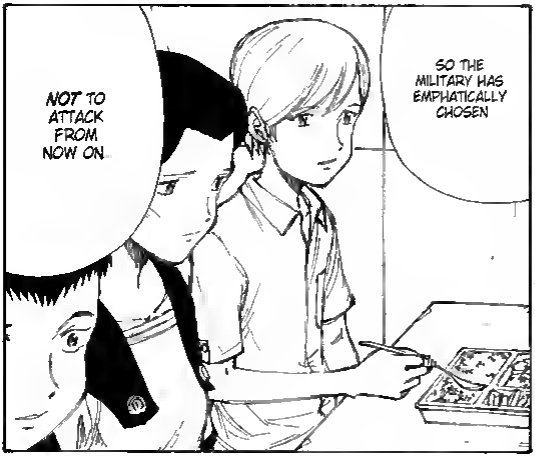
IT'S A BIT LIKE A STATUS REPORT MIXED WITH A MEETING.
H
FS.
BRIE..
DON'T WORRY, TATE IS WITH HIM.
HE'S WITH THE POLICE
WHERE'S KIRIE?
13
NOW, SHALL WE EAT?
IT'S KIRIE'S PROBLEM SO YOU CAN ASK HIM YOURSELF.
IT'S NOT MY BUSINESS TO DISCUSS
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?!
THE POLICE?!

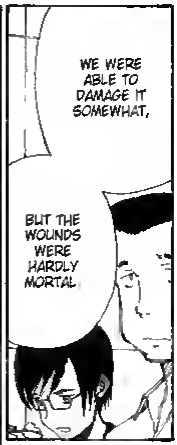
YOU MEAN... TO KAKO?
I DIDN'T THINK HE WOULD SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT
YOU KNOW KIRIE...
YOU DON'T GET IT.
"YOU'RE PRETTY FAST, RIGHT," OR WHATEVER IT WAS.
IT WAS PRETTY HARSH
BUT SOMEBODY HAD TO TELL HIM.
SO...
NOBODY COULD SAY ANYTHING TO HIM JUST THEN, COULD WE?

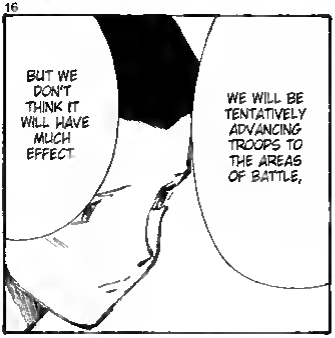
KIRIE
TOOK THE FALL.
THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE WE COULD HAVE DONE.
UN-FORTUN-ATELY,
IT BACKFIRED ON KAKO.
WELL, I'VE GOT TWO THINGS TO REPORT,
SO LISTEN UP AS YOU EAT.

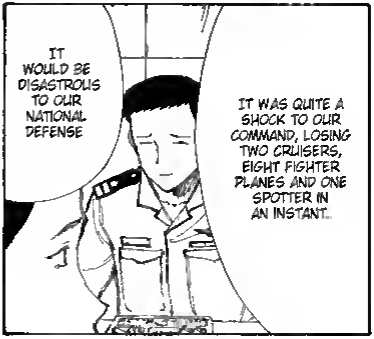

WAS SHOWN TO BE EMBARRASS-INGLY INADEQUATE, RIGHT?
NO SHIT
IN THE LAST FIGHT, OUR ABILITY TO ATTACK THE ENEMY CONVENTIONALLY

THE FIRST IS ABOUT THE MILITARY'S ACTIONS FROM NOW ON.


NOT TO ATTACK FROM NOW ON.
SO THE MILITARY HAS EMPHATICALLY CHOSEN

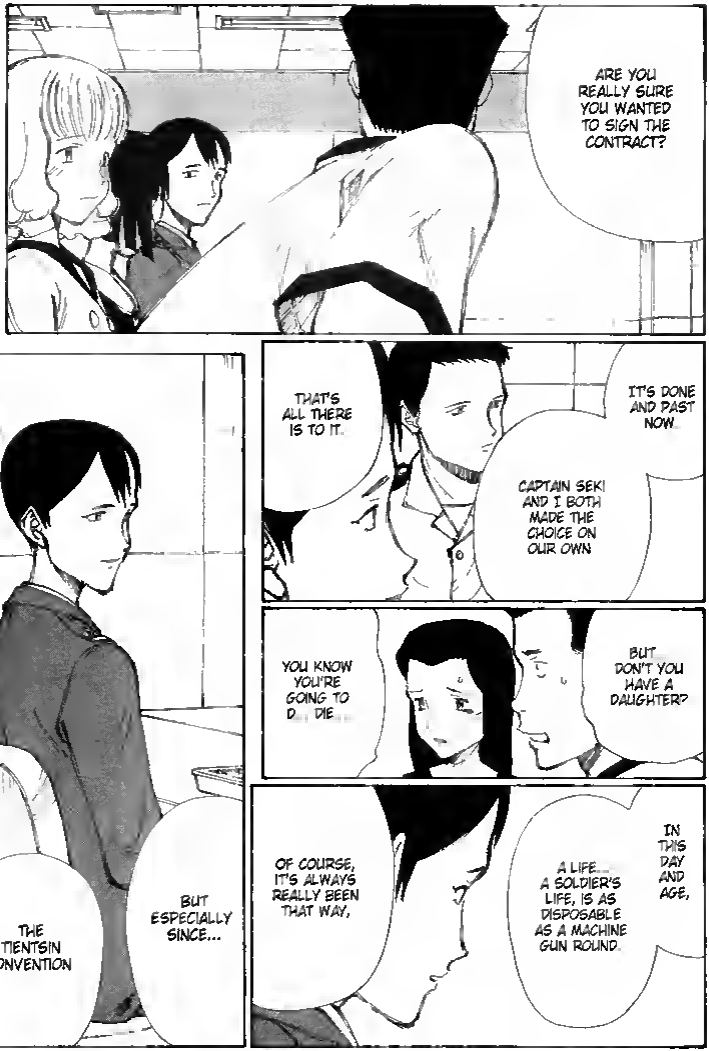

WE WERE ABLE TO DAMAGE IT SOMEWHAT,
BUT THE WOUNDS WERE HARDLY MORTAL.


BUT WE DON'T THINK IT WILL HAVE MUCH EFFECT.
WE WILL BE TENTATIVELY ADVANCING TROOPS TO THE AREAS OF BATTLE,


IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS TO OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE
IT WAS QUITE A SHOCK TO OUR COMMAND, LOSING TWO CRUISERS, EIGHT FIGHTER PLANES AND ONE SPOTTER IN AN INSTANT.

ABOUT THE GIANT BLACK MONSTER THAT WAS A TOTAL MYSTERY UP UNTIL NOW.
THEY'VE BEEN CLEAR IN SAYING THE MILITARY HAS SOME KIND OF INFO
THE OTHER NEWS REGARDS THE MEDIA RESPONSE TO ZEARTH
AFTER THE MILITARY'S ACTIONS LAST BATTLE,
17
I THINK WE'LL HAVE TO ASK MR. DUNG BEETLE FOR HELP WHEN TRANSPORTING ALL OF YOU.
I REALLY DON'T LIKE THIS CHICK
IN ANY CASE, PLEASE BE VERY CAREFUL
BUT IT'LL ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME
THEY HAVEN'T QUITE CALIGHT ON THAT WE HAVE CONTROL OF IT,
BECAUSE OF MISS HONDA'S ACTIONS,
BUT I THINK WE MANAGED TO SETTLE THAT.
SOMEONE WAS EVEN GETTING CLOSE TO ZEROING IN ON YOU KIDS

AND THAT WE ASK OUR CITIZENS, IF NOT THE ENTIRE WORLD, FOR THEIR HELP IN THE MATTER
THAT EVERYTHING ABOUT ZEARTH, INCLUDING YOU CHILDREN, SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN,
IT IS MY PERSONAL OPINION
AND FOR NOW WE WILL SIMPLY HAVE TO OBEY THEM
BUT THE GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY COMMANDERS DO NOT THINK THE SAME WAY,
UMM...
MRS TANAKA?
I'M SORRY THAT THIS REPORT ISN'T DOING MUCH
TO BUOY YOUR FEELINGS
THIS IS JUST MY OWN PERSONAL GRIPING
I GUESS YOU CAN'T EXPECT MUCH WITH THESE OSTRICH/ POSTPONEMENT POLICIES


ARE YOU REALLY SURE YOU WANTED TO SIGN THE CONTRACT?
IT'S DONE AND PAST NOW.
CAPTAIN SEKI AND I BOTH MADE THE CHOICE ON OUR OWN.
THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.
BUT DON'T YOU HAVE A DAUGHTER?
YOU KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO D... DIE...
IN THIS DAY AND AGE,
A LIFE... A SOLDIER'S LIFE, IS AS DISPOSABLE AS A MACHINE GUN ROUND.
OF COURSE, IT'S ALWAYS REALLY BEEN THAT WAY,
BUT ESPECIALLY SINCE...
THE TIENTSIN CONVENTION

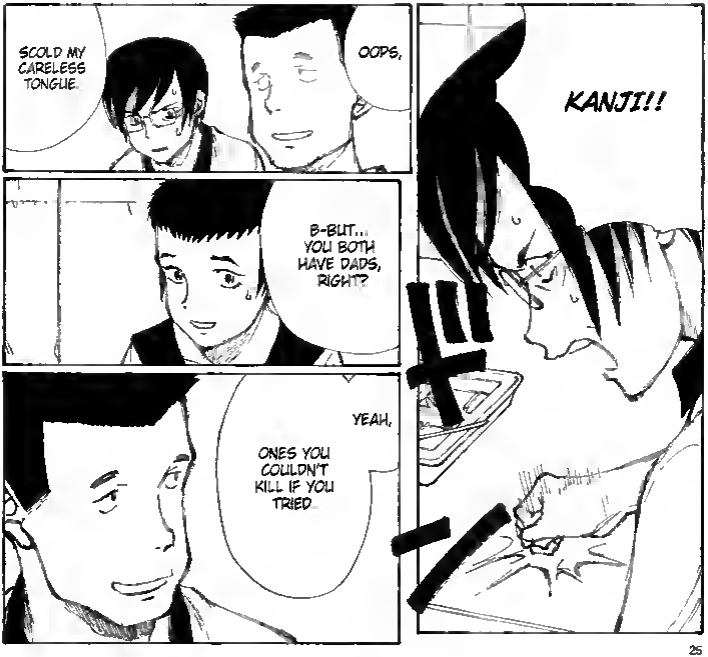
IT'S AN AGREEMENT CREATED BY THE AMERICAN ARMY TO LIMIT THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNMANNED WEAPONS!!
I DO!!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS?
20
FROM STARTING WARS AT NO REAL COST.
IT WAS MADE TO PREVENT COUNTRIES THAT HAD UNMANNED AND ROBOTIC WEAPONRY
IT WASN'T ONLY THE AMERICAN ARMY.
YOU SHUT UP!
WHAT A MILITARY NERD
FROM AN UNMANNED, GUIDED WEAPON.
THE CONVENTION STATES THAT YOU CANNOT FIRE OR DISENGAGE OTHER WEAPONS

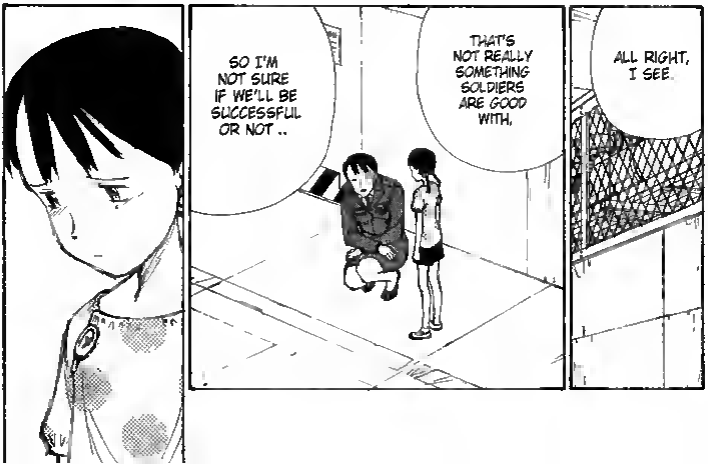
ALL THEY COULD DO WAS RECON AND REFUELING
BECAUSE OF THAT, WARFARE BETWEEN UNMANNED JETS AND ROBOT SOLDIERS WAS IMPOSSIBLE
AND THERE IS AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF VERY DETAILED DISTINCTION MADE
OF COURSE, THEY DID DEFINE SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR THE DEFINITION OF UNMANNED GUIDED WEAPONS THEMSELVES,
21
IN OTHER WORDS, TO GO TO WAR REQUIRES YOU TO RISK THE LOSS OF HUMAN LIFE ON YOUR SIDE.
UM, JUST FOR A WALK.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, KANA?
HANG ON, I'LL GET SOME READY.
LOOKS LIKE WE NEED MORE TEA.
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT.
SO WHEN YOU JOIN THE MILITARY,

EXCUSE ME...
22
I... I HAVE A... REQUEST.
WHAT IS IT?
I'LL DO WHATEVER I CAN FOR YOU.
CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET?
OF COURSE.
I WANT YOU...
TO LOOK FOR SOMEONE.

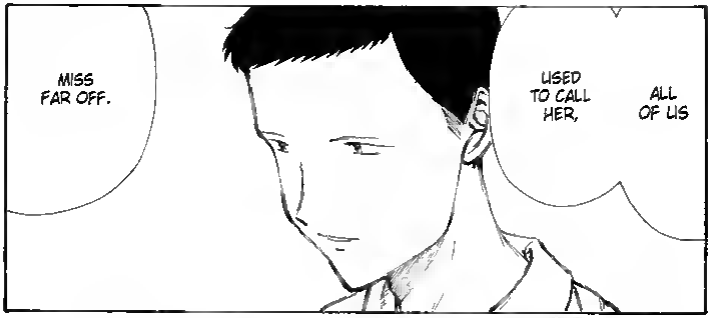
WHO KNOWS?
WHAT? SHE DOES?
SHE'S A SOLDIER SO SHE DOESN'T WEAR PERFUME.
SHE SMELLS REAL NICE.
YOU KNOW...
23
WHAT? REALLY?!
KANJI'S A MAMA'S BOY.
FUCK YOU.
YOU'RE A MAMA'S BOY, TOO.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH LOVING YOUR MOM?
WHAT, IS THAT WEIRD TO YOU?

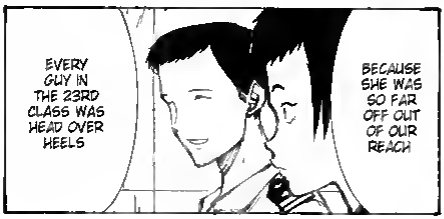
GEEZ, MAN, CHILL OUT.
KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT!!
KANJI!!
WHY?
THAT'S WHY YOU TAKE IT OUT ON KANA, ISN'T IT?
SURE YOU ARE
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
OH, SHE'S DEAD ALREADY.
WHAT'S YOUR MOM LIKE?
SHE DIED GIVING BIRTH TO KANA.
USHIRO'S MOM'S DEAD, TOO.

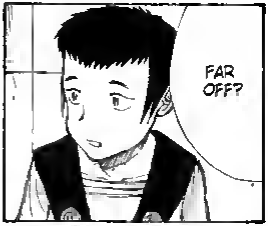

SCOLD MY CARELESS TONGUE.
OOPS,
KANJI!!
B-BUT... YOU BOTH HAVE DADS, RIGHT?
YEAH,
ONES YOU COULDN'T KILL IF YOU TRIED.

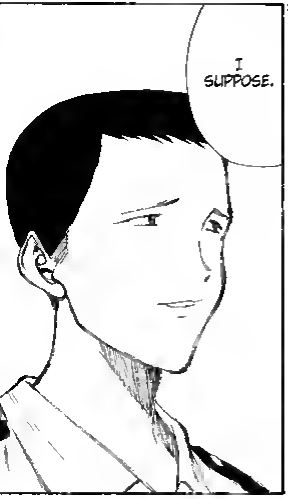

SO I'M NOT SURE IF WE'LL BE SUCCESSFUL OR NOT ..
THAT'S NOT REALLY SOMETHING SOLDIERS ARE GOOD WITH,
ALL RIGHT, I SEE.

P... PLEASE DO!!
BUT WE'LL TRY.
PRETTY POWERFUL?
IS MRS. TANAKA
NOBODY COULD STAND UP TO HER IN WARGAME TRAINING
BUT, SHE IS INCREDIBLE
WELL, SHE'S THE SAME RANK AS ME
POWERFUL?

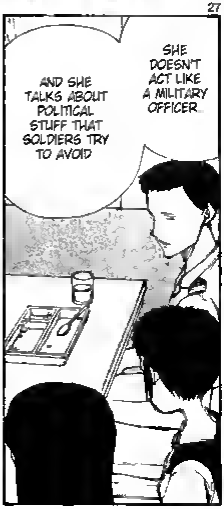

MISS FAR OFF.
USED TO CALL HER,
ALL OF US

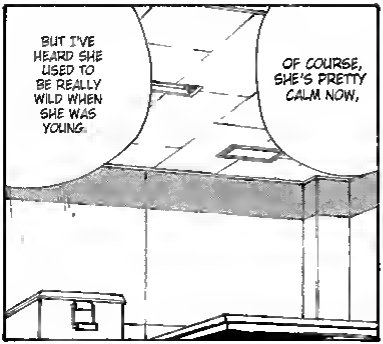

EVERY GUY IN THE 23RD CLASS WAS HEAD OVER HEELS
BECAUSE SHE WAS SO FAR OFF OUT OF OUR REACH

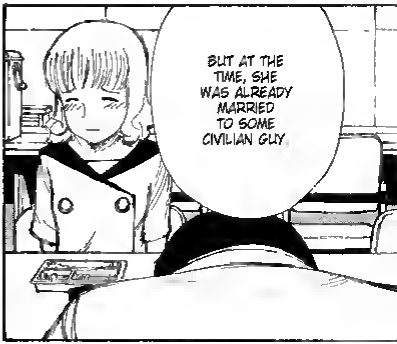

FAR OFF?


I SUPPOSE.

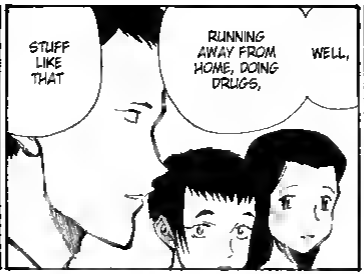
C'MON, DON'T ASK ME THAT KINDA STUFF
DID YOU LIKE HER, TOO?


AND SHE TALKS ABOUT POLITICAL STUFF THAT SOLDIERS TRY TO AVOID
SHE DOESN'T ACT LIKE A MILITARY OFFICER


BUT I'VE HEARD SHE USED TO BE REALLY WILD WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG.
OF COURSE, SHE'S PRETTY CALM NOW.


BUT AT THE TIME, SHE WAS ALREADY MARRIED TO SOME CIVILIAN GUY.

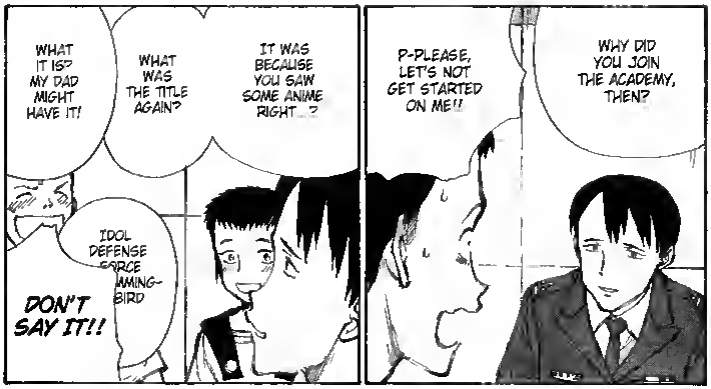
YIKES.

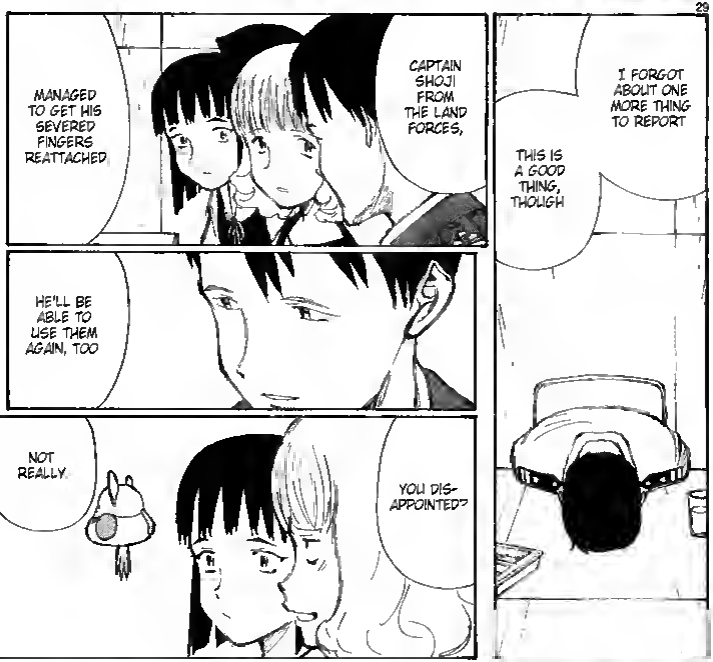

STUFF LIKE THAT
RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME, DOING DRUGS,
WELL,

WILD?

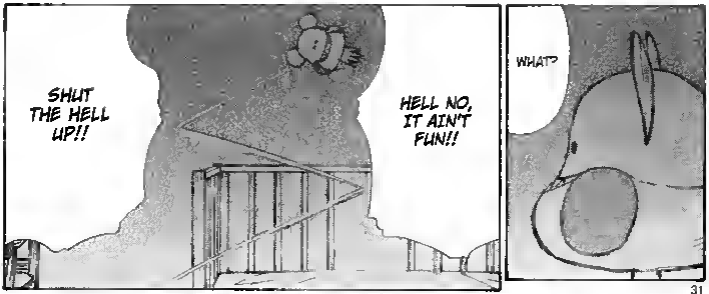
SORRY.
BLABBER-MOUTH

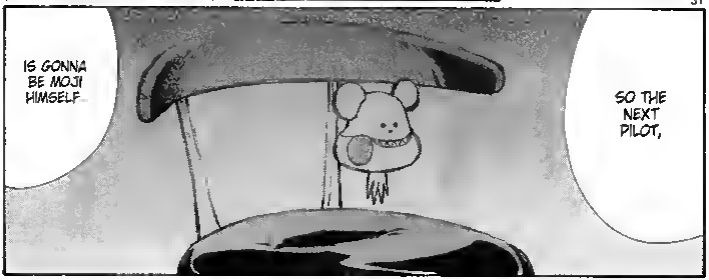
SHE DECIDED TO BE A SOLDIER.
SO TO MAKE UP FOR HER DISHONOR,

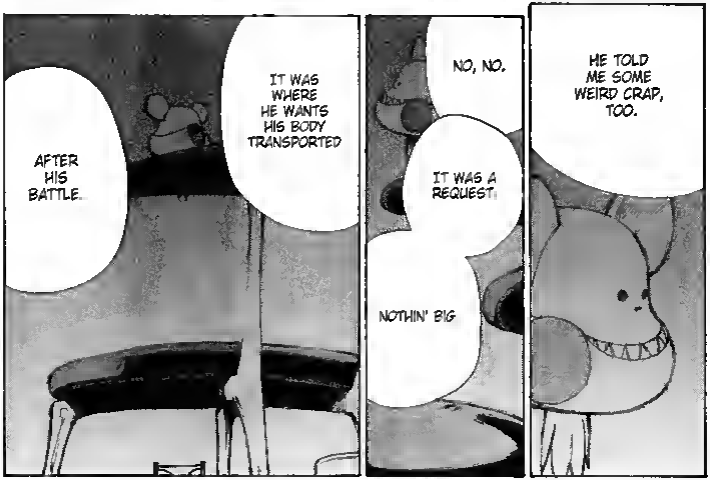

WHAT IT IS? MY DAD MIGHT HAVE IT!
WHAT WAS THE TITLE AGAIN?
IT WAS BECAUSE YOU SAW SOME ANIME RIGHT...?
IDOL DEFENSE FORCE AMING-BIRD
DON'T SAY IT!!
P-PLEASE, LET'S NOT GET STARTED ON ME!!
WHY DID YOU JOIN THE ACADEMY, THEN?


MANAGED TO GET HIS SEVERED FINGERS REATTACHED
CAPTAIN SHOJI FROM THE LAND FORCES,
HE'LL BE ABLE TO USE THEM AGAIN, TOO
I FORGOT ABOUT ONE MORE THING TO REPORT
THIS IS A GOOD THING, THOUGH
NOT REALLY.
YOU DIS-APPOINTED?

I REALLY GOT PISSED
WHEN NAKARAI SAID THAT CRAP,
AND ALL THAT BULL.
SAYIN' MOJI WAS ON MY SIDE,
HELL NO HE AIN'T.
WAS SHE RETARDED?
30
IF YOU'D JUST GET THE HELL BACK OUT THERE, I WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH THIS SHIT.
I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE THEN
HMPH
JUST BRINGING THE POSSIBILITY UP GIVES ME PROBLEMS.


SHUT THE HELL UP!!
HELL NO, IT AIN'T FUN!!
WHAT?

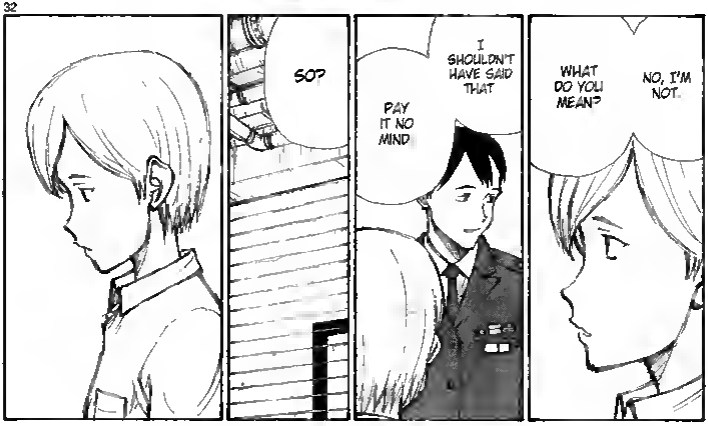

IS GONNA BE MOJI HIMSELF...
SO THE NEXT PILOT,


AFTER HIS BATTLE...
IT WAS WHERE HE WANTS HIS BODY TRANSPORTED
NO, NO.
IT WAS A REQUEST.
NOTHIN' BIG
HE TOLD ME SOME WEIRD CRAP, TOO.

I HAVE A REQUEST

SO,
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TELL ME, MOJI?

YOU'RE NOT LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TOO,
ARE YOU?


SO?
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT
PAY IT NO MIND
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
NO, I'M NOT.

I WANT YOU TO PREPARE A HOSPITAL TO BE READY
AFTER MY BATTLE IS OVER,
MY FRIEND.
FOR WHO?
SURGERY?
TO PERFORM SURGERY IMMEDIATELY.
OF USING ZEARTH TO KILL.
THE FRIEND I WAS THINKING

CHAPTER 21/END

Waku Takashi
(Waku)

Isao Kako
(Kako)

Daiichi Yamura
(Daichi)

Masaru Kodaka
(Kodama)

Kanji Yoshikawa
(Kanji)

Yasuhiko Meji
(Meji)

Jun Ushiro
(Ushiro)

Yosuke Kirie
(Kirie)

Nako Nakarai
(Nakarai)

Aiko Tokosumi
(Anko)

Yoko Machi
(Machi)

Chizuru Honda
(Chizu)

Takami Komoda
(Komo)

Maki Ano
(Maki)

Kana Ushiro
(Kana)

Dung Beetle

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CHAPTER 22
KUNIHIKO MOJI (2)

MY PUNISH-MENT
YOU'RE GOOD AT PREDICTING.
YOU KNOW WHAT, MOJI?
THIS IS...
HE'S NOT JUST GUESSING.
HOW'D YOU KNOW WE WERE HAVING A POP QUIZ IN MATH TODAY?
2
THEN YOU CAN USUALLY TELL.
OR HE'LL WAIT UNTIL A WEEK AFTER A NEW SUBJECT.
SOMETIMES HE JUST SEEMS FIDGETY IN THE MORNING.
LIKE, HE WON'T DO IT ON THE SAME DAY OF THE WEEK AS THE LAST TEST,
MR. HATTORI'S TESTS HAVE A WEIRD PATTERN

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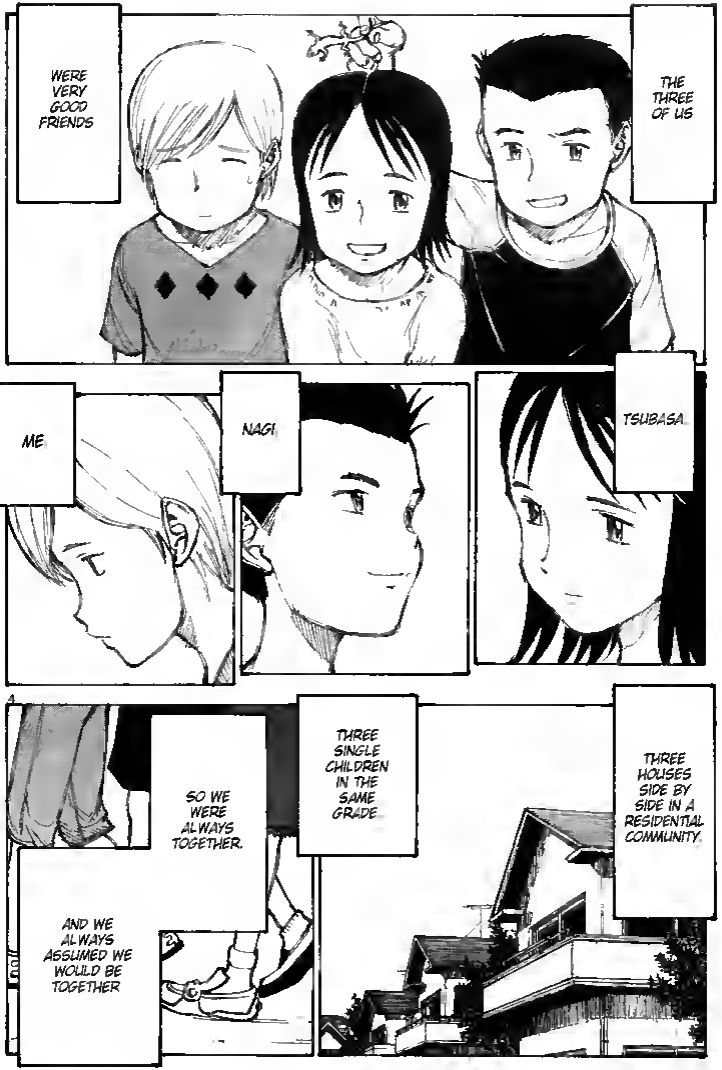
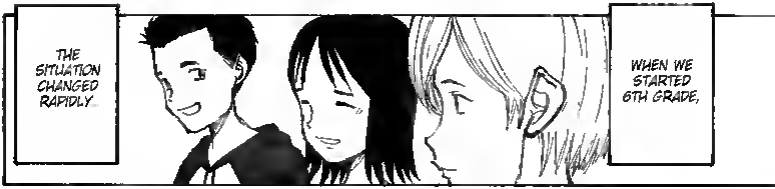
WHAT?! WHAT IS IT?!
I KNOW WHAT YOUR MOM'S GONNA SERVE FOR SNACKS TODAY, TOO.
YOU GONNA COME OVER AGAIN TODAY?
SEE?
YEAH RIGHT! YOU CAN'T TELL JUST FROM THAT.
PLUS I KNOW HOW MUCH SHE LIKES THEM.
AND THEY'RE HAVING A SALE AT THE STORE.
THE WEATHER IS NICE TODAY,
WARABI MOCHI.
SHE ASKED ME TO COME BY TODAY
THAT'S CHEATING!!
GOTCHA I ASKED HER THIS MORNING.

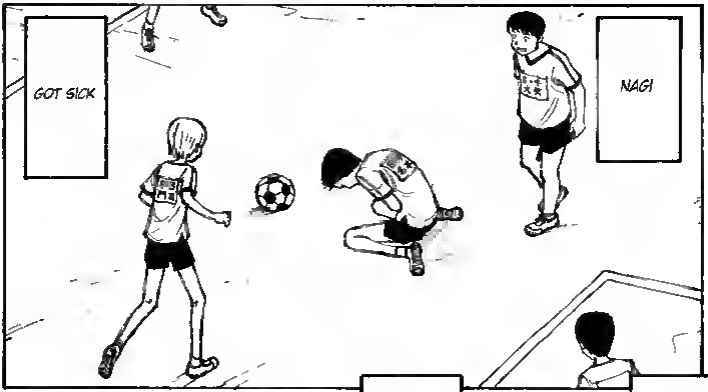
3

Note: Warabi mochi are a type of sweet, chewy treat authentically made with bracken root, but that is rare enough that most are made with a substitute like kudzu root.


WERE VERY GOOD FRIENDS
THE THREE OF US
ME
NAGI
TSUBASA
THREE SINGLE CHILDREN IN THE SAME GRADE
THREE HOUSES SIDE BY SIDE IN A RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY.
SO WE WERE ALWAYS TOGETHER.
AND WE ALWAYS ASSUMED WE WOULD BE TOGETHER

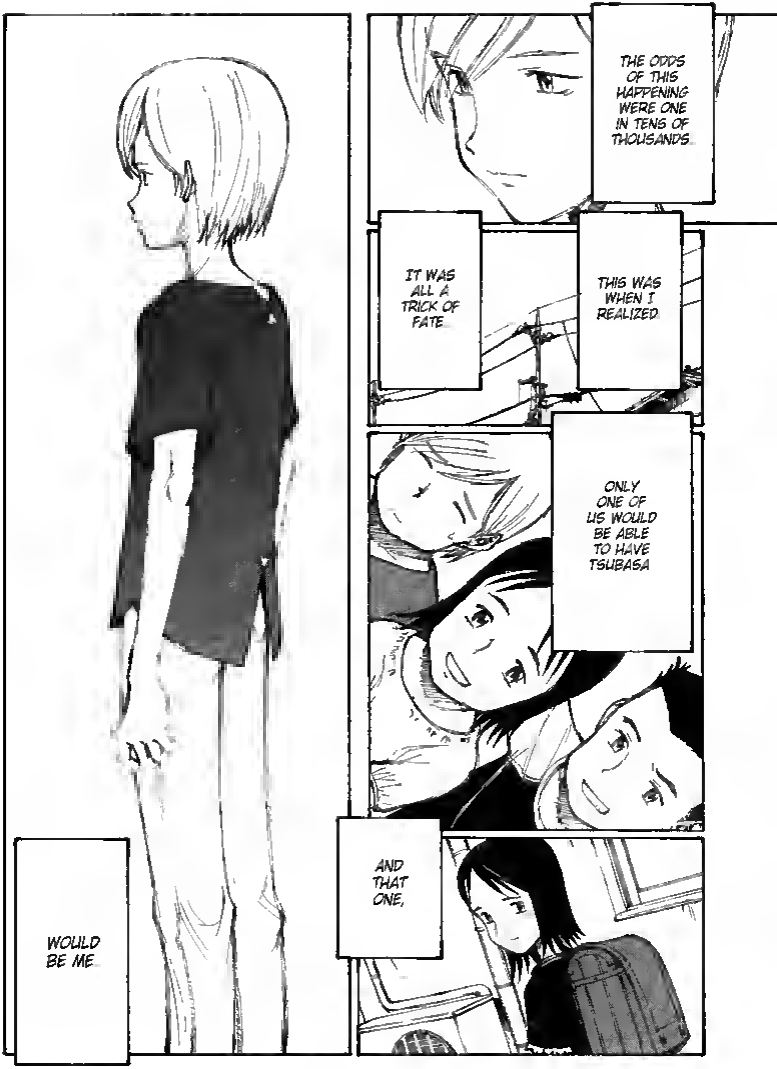
IN THE SUMMER OF 5TH GRADE
WE ONLY FOUND OUT THAT WE COULDN'T DO THAT
IT WAS THE MOMENT WHEN WE FINALLY UNDERSTOOD THAT TSUBASA WAS A GIRL.
I'M SURE NAGI MUST HAVE NOTICED.
THAT THIS RELATIONSHIP WOULD NOT REMAIN THE SAME FOREVER
BUT FOR ALL APPEARANCES,
WE WERE JUST AS FRIENDLY AS EVER.


THE SITUATION CHANGED RAPIDLY.
WHEN WE STARTED 6TH GRADE,

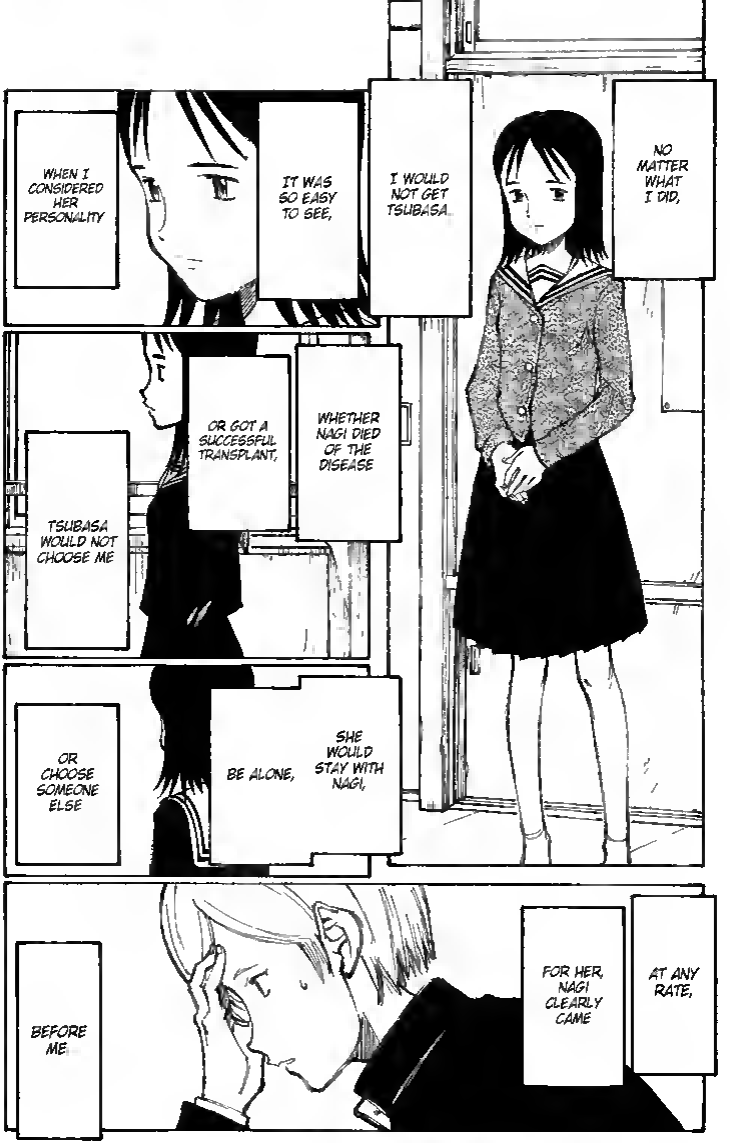

GOT SICK
NAGI

6
AND THEN HE COULDN'T COME TO SCHOOL.
SOON, HE WAS FORBIDDEN FROM PHYSICAL EXERCISE,
EVEN IF HE GOT A TRANSPLANT, HE WOULD HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE SIDE EFFECTS OF ANTIREJECTION MEDICATION FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE
A DISEASE THAT WOULD KILL HIM, IF HE DIDN'T RECEIVE A HEART TRANSPLANT.
IT WAS A HEART DISEASE.

ONE DAY, ON A SUDDEN WHIM
I HAD A TEST TO DETERMINE THE LIKELIHOOD OF REJECTION BETWEEN NAGI'S HEART AND MINE
JUST OUT OF CURIOSITY
IT TURNED OUT...
7
THE ANSWER WAS,
ZERO.
IN OTHER WORDS,
I COULD TRANSPLANT MY HEART INTO NAGI'S BODY WITHOUT ANY IMMUNOLOGICAL REJECTION
THEY CALLED IT A "FULL MATCH."
THERE WAS A LOW POSSIBILITY OF MEDICATION NEEDED, SO HE WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HEAVY SIDE EFFECTS.


THE ODDS OF THIS HAPPENING WERE ONE IN TENS OF THOUSANDS.
IT WAS ALL A TRICK OF FATE.
THIS WAS WHEN I REALIZED
ONLY ONE OF US WOULD BE ABLE TO HAVE TSUBASA
AND THAT ONE,
WOULD BE ME.

STUDIED WITH HIM,
WE TOLD HIM WHAT HAPPENED IN SCHOOL,
TSUBASA AND I VISITED NAGI
NEARLY EVERY DAY,
PLAYED WITH HIM
MAYBE I WAS SMILING LIKE I HAD WON SOMETHING
WAS HARD TO DESCRIBE IN WORDS
THE EXPRESSION ON NAGI'S FACE WHEN I WOULD LEAVE WITH TSUBASA,
9
THAT WAS WHEN I UNDERSTOOD
AND I HAD TO LEAVE BY MYSELF
TSUBASA SAID SHE WOULD STAY A BIT LONGER,
BUT ONE DAY,

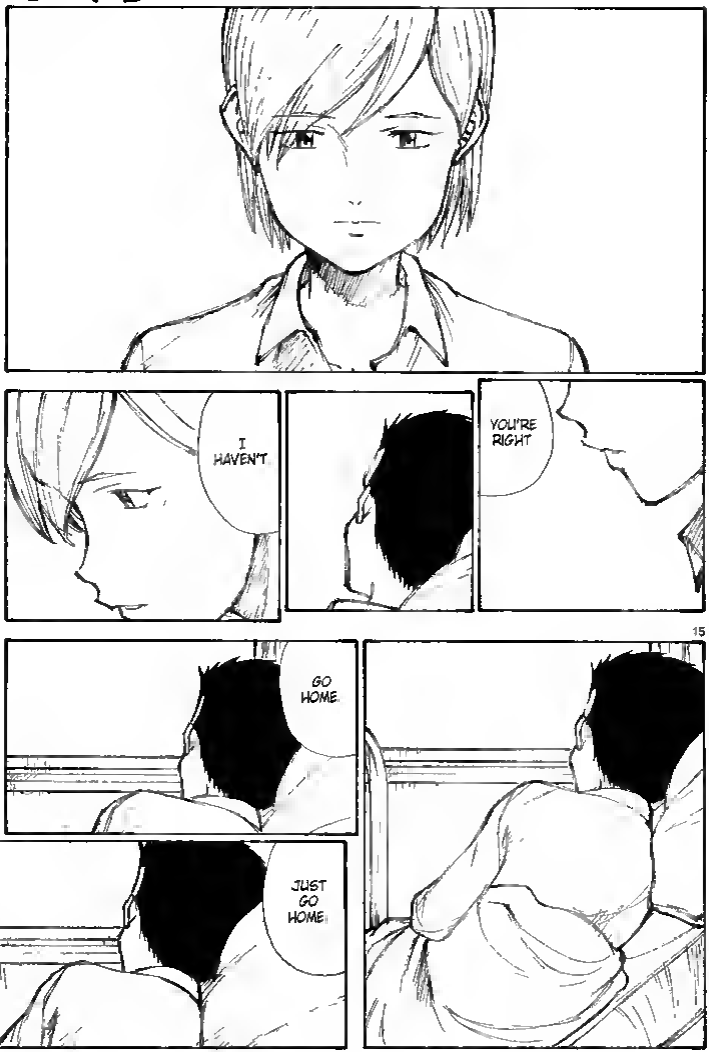

NO MATTER WHAT I DID,
I WOULD NOT GET TSUBASA
IT WAS SO EASY TO SEE,
WHEN I CONSIDERED HER PERSONALITY
WHETHER NAGI DIED OF THE DISEASE
OR GOT A SUCCESSFUL TRANSPLANT,
TSUBASA WOULD NOT CHOOSE ME
SHE WOULD STAY WITH NAGI,
BE ALONE,
OR CHOOSE SOMEONE ELSE
AT ANY RATE,
FOR HER, NAGI CLEARLY CAME
BEFORE ME

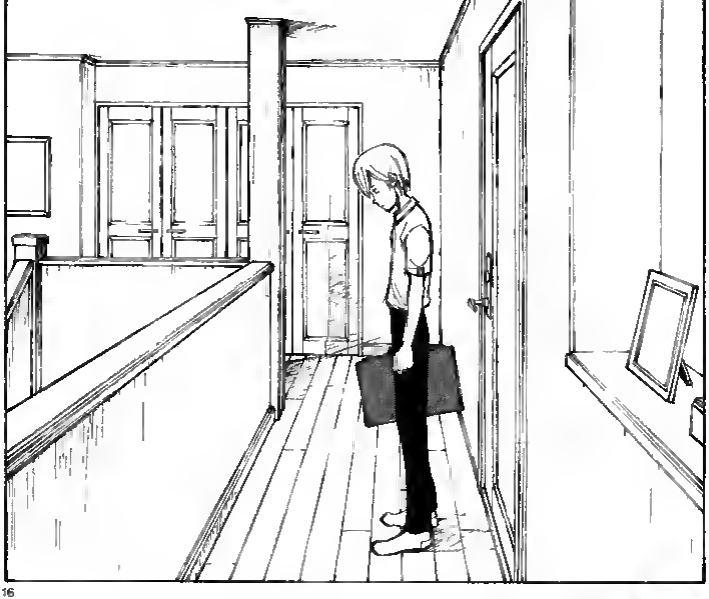
THERE WAS ONE SITUATION IN WHICH I MIGHT HAVE TSUBASA AFTER ALL.
HOWEVER,
IF NAGI DIED,
FROM SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE DISEASE
AND THEN,
THAT WAY, I COULD STILL BE TOGETHER WITH TSUBASA
A DEATH THAT COULD JUST AS EASILY HAPPEN TO ME
IN OTHER WORDS, A DEATH THAT WOULD BE THE SAME FOR BOTH OF US,
I MET ZEARTH.

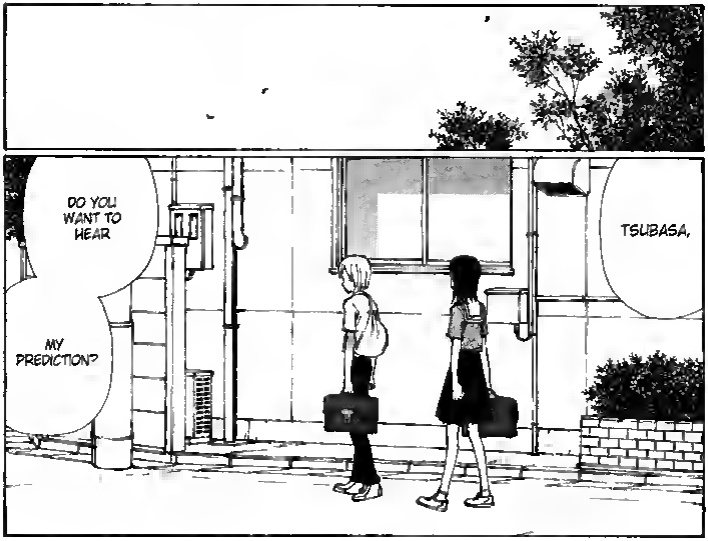
I WOULD USE ZEARTH TO KILL A PARTICULAR PERSON.
THE MOMENT I SAW ZEARTH, I HAD THE SAME THOUGHT AS CHIZU.
12
THE LIKELIHOOD THAT OUR CHANCES OF PILOTING ZEARTH WOULD BE DENIED WAS GROWING.
WITH THE MILITARY INVOLVED AND THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES INCREASING,
THAT CHIZU COULD KILL KAKO WITH SUCH LITTLE HESITATION.
I KNOW EXACTLY HOW IT WAS
CHIZU'S REVENGE WAS ULTIMATELY FOILED HALFWAY.
BUT CURSE ANOTHER, AND YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF CURSED.
THEN THERE WOULD BE NO REVENGE.
AND I
WAS PUNISHED.

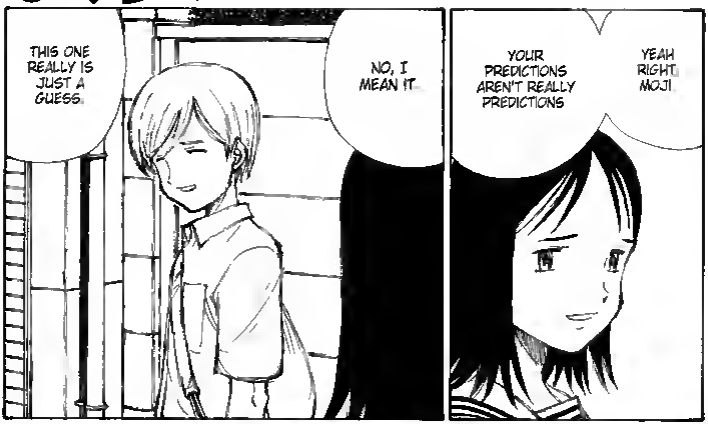
WHO WAS GOING TO DIE
I WAS THE ONE,
WHEN I REALIZED THAT,
MY ENTIRE PLAN BECAME MEANING-LESS
KILLING NAGI WAS MEANING-LESS
THIS WAS PUNISH-MENT,
NAGI'S BEEN REALLY EMOTIONAL, LATELY.
FOR THINKING OF KILLING MY BEST FRIEND.
I'M COMING IN,
NAGI.

14
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW I FEEL
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
TO KNOW YOU'RE JUST ABOUT TO DIE
YOU'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT IT'S LIKE

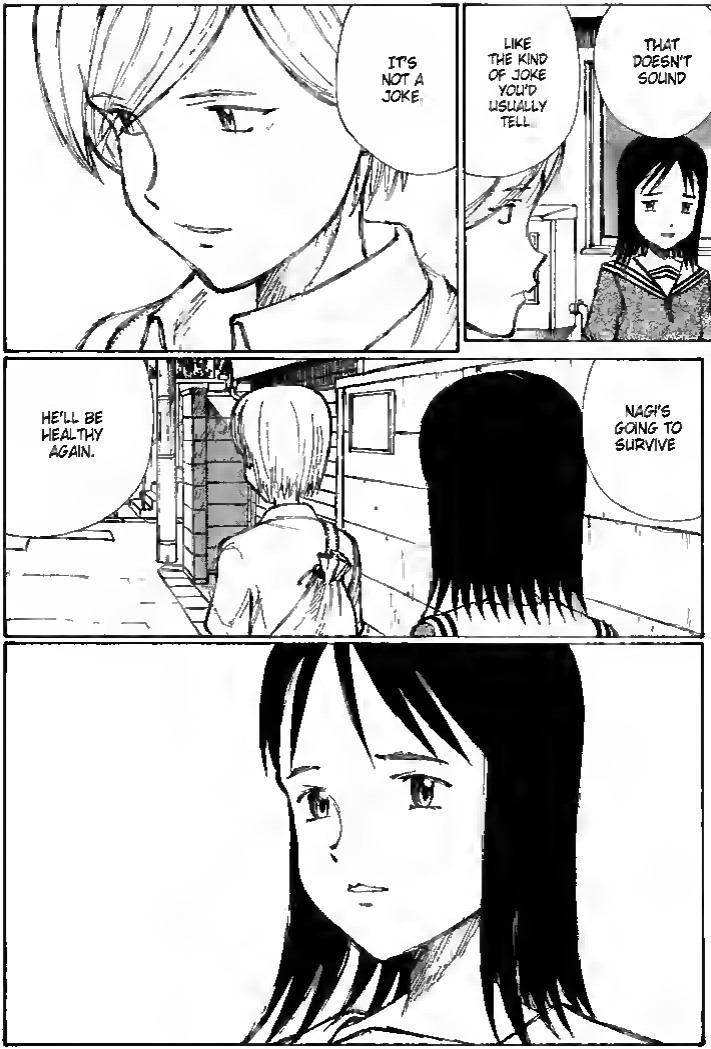

I HAVEN'T
YOU'RE RIGHT
GO HOME
JUST GO HOME



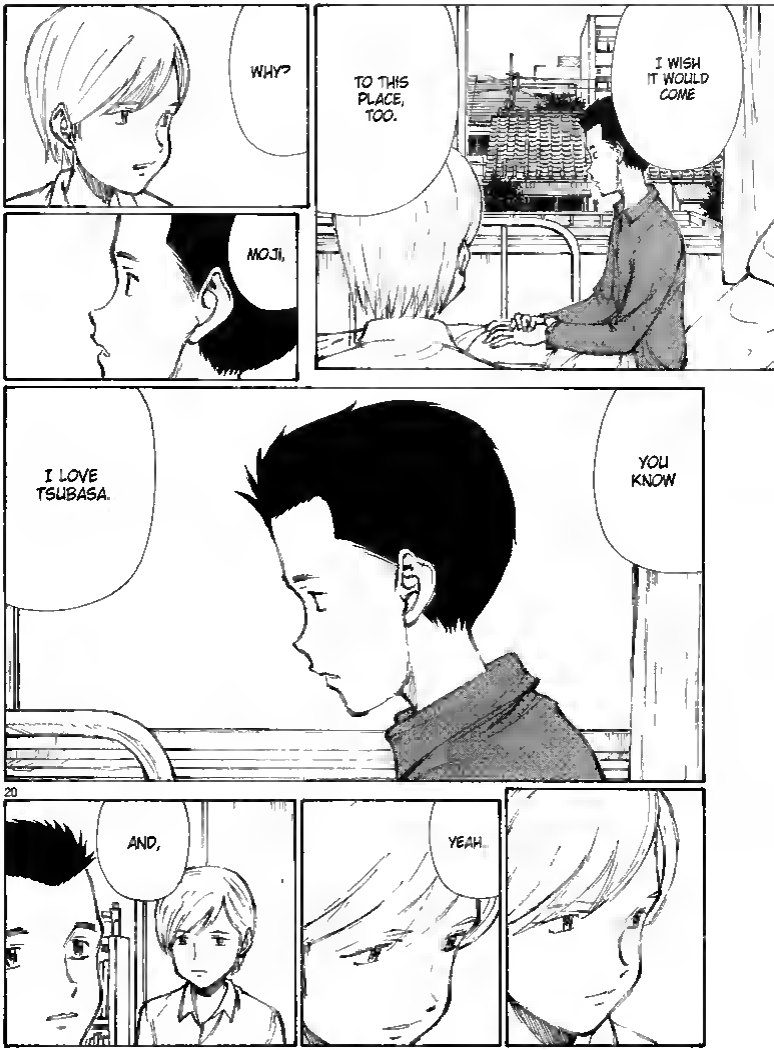

DO YOU WANT TO HEAR
MY PREDICTION?
TSUBASA,


THIS ONE REALLY IS JUST A GUESS.
NO, I MEAN IT.
YOUR PREDICTIONS AREN'T REALLY PREDICTIONS
YEAH RIGHT, MOJI.

A FULL MATCH DONOR,
WITH NO BIOLOGICAL REJECTION TO WORRY ABOUT.
A DONOR.
VERY SOON, NAGI'S GONNA FIND


IT'S NOT A JOKE.
LIKE THE KIND OF JOKE YOU'D USUALLY TELL.
THAT DOESN'T SOUND
HE'LL BE HEALTHY AGAIN.
NAGI'S GOING TO SURVIVE

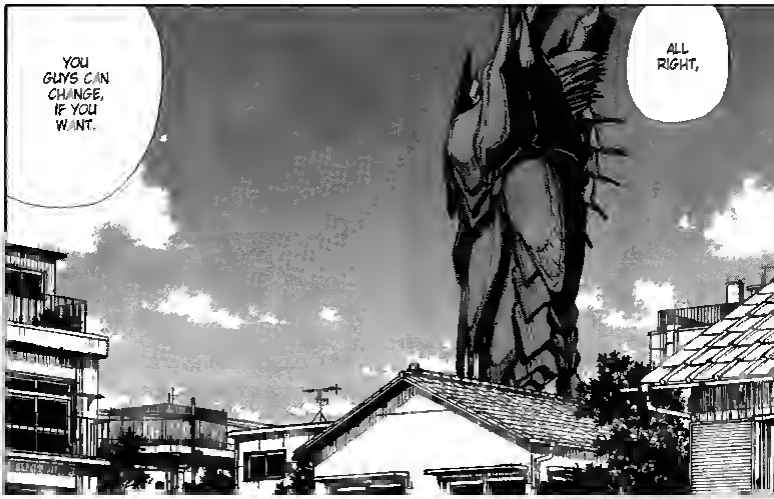
DO YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT ME, OR SOMETHING?
YOU'VE BEEN KIND OF WEIRD LATELY...
I JUST CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL DEPRESSED ABOUT WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON...
NO.
YOU KNOW,
MY DAD SAID,
THERE ARE GOING TO BE SPECIAL EMERGENCY TAX INCREASES
IT ALREADY COSTS ENOUGH TO KEEP ME ALIVE
THE BLACK MONSTER
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IT'S PRETTY CRAZY.
OH, RIGHT.
I CAN TELL, JUST LYING ON THIS BED.
THE WHOLE WORLD FEELS DEPRESSED.


WHY?
MOJI,
TO THIS PLACE, TOO.
I WISH IT WOULD COME
I LOVE TSUBASA.
YOU KNOW
AND,
YEAH.

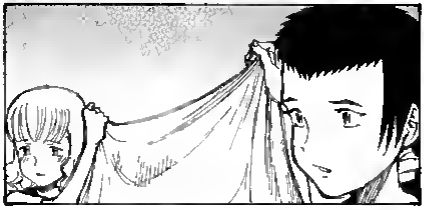
SHE'S A REALLY NICE GIRL
RIGHT?
RIGHT WHEN YOU GUYS WENT INTO MIDDLE SCHOOL,
SHE TOLD ME
21
DON'T WORRY
I WON'T CHOOSE ANYONE ELSE
UNTIL YOU GET BETTER
SO DON'T LOOK LIKE THAT
BUT I'M NEVER GONNA GET BETTER,
AM I?
EVEN IF I GET THE SURGERY,
THERE ARE ALL THE MEDICATION SIDE EFFECTS

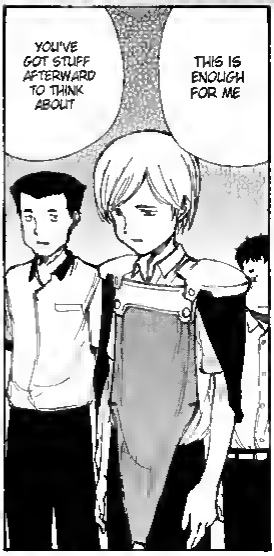
I DON'T WANT TO TIE TSUBASA DOWN.
IF SHE RUINS ALL HER CHANCES TO BE HAPPY, JUST BECAUSE OF ME,
I'D JUST DRAG HER DOWN WITH ME, THEN EVEN AFTER I DIE, RIGHT?
SO I HOPE THAT BLACK MONSTER...
COMES ALONG...
AND KILLS ME.

ABOUT WHAT I SAID EARLIER.
I'M SORRY
MOJI,
TAKE CARE OF HER.
PLEASE.


YOU GUYS CAN CHANGE, IF YOU WANT.
ALL RIGHT,

WE'VE GOT EVERY-THING SET UP
DON'T WORRY,
CAN YOU TAKE CARE OF WHAT I ASKED ABOUT?
MRS. TANAKA,




YOU'VE GOT STUFF AFTERWARD TO THINK ABOUT
THIS IS ENOUGH FOR ME

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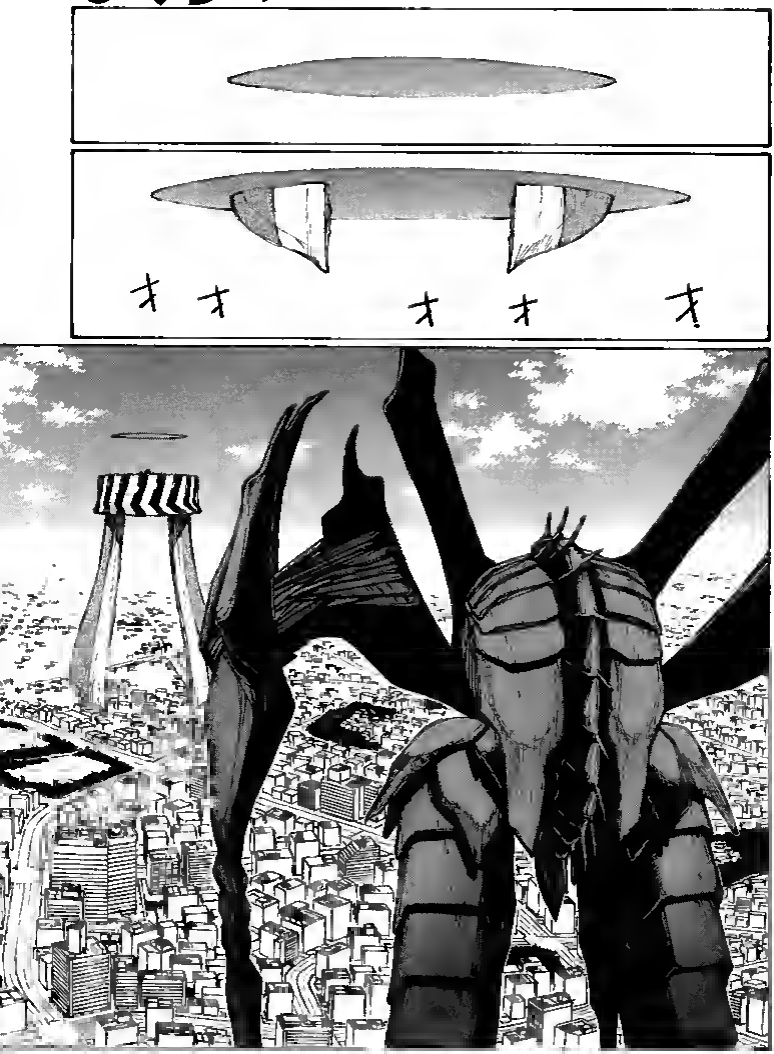
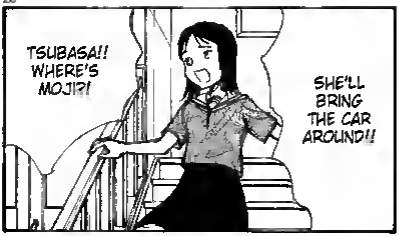
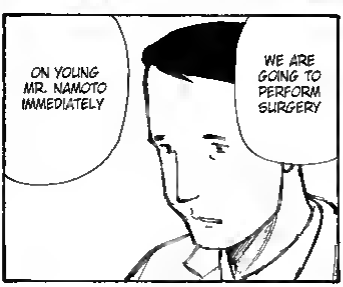


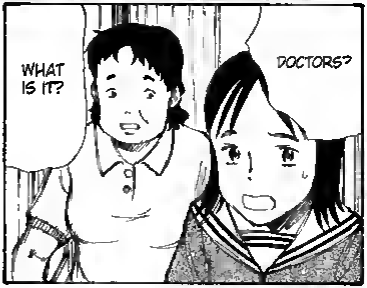

TSUBASA!! WHERE'S MOJI?!
SHE'LL BRING THE CAR AROUND!!

MY MOM TOOK WORK OFF, TODAY!!
COME ON, WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!!

HE WAS AT SCHOOL, BUT..
ガチャ

HUH?!


ON YOUNG MR. NAMOTO IMMEDIATELY
WE ARE GOING TO PERFORM SURGERY


WHAT IS IT?
DOCTORS?

WE'LL TAKE HIM THERE NOW.
THE SURGERY WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE NATIONAL DEFENSE HOSPITAL

WHA.

28
LOOK...
WAIT A MINUTE.
MOJI, WE SHOULD MOVE THE BATTLE TO THE COAST...

THE ENEMY'S VITAL SPOT IS EXPOSED?!
THE VITALS?
THAT SHAPE...
BUT...
SO WE CAN JUST SMASH THAT AND WIN...?
NOPE.
THAT'S YOUR TARGET.
IS IT A FAKE ...?
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

I'LL MOVE BACK AND WATCH FOR A WHILE.
BE CAREFUL, GUYS.
YEAH, A BIT.
DOES SOMETHING SEEM ODD TO YOU, KANJI?
LOOKS GROSS, THOUGH
IT'S NOT THAT WEIRD..
ドス
ず？

WHA...
IT'S FOLLOWING, MOJI!!
ヒ!!
I'LL TRY ATTACKING!!
YUCK!!

32
IT BLOCKED THE LASERS!!
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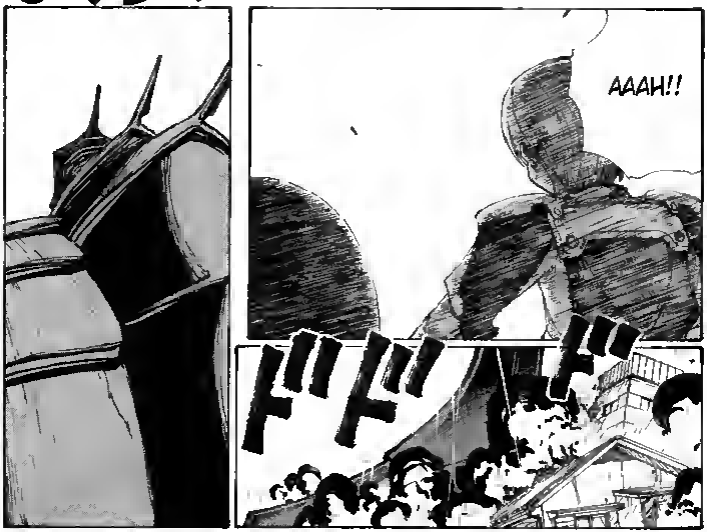
AAAH!!
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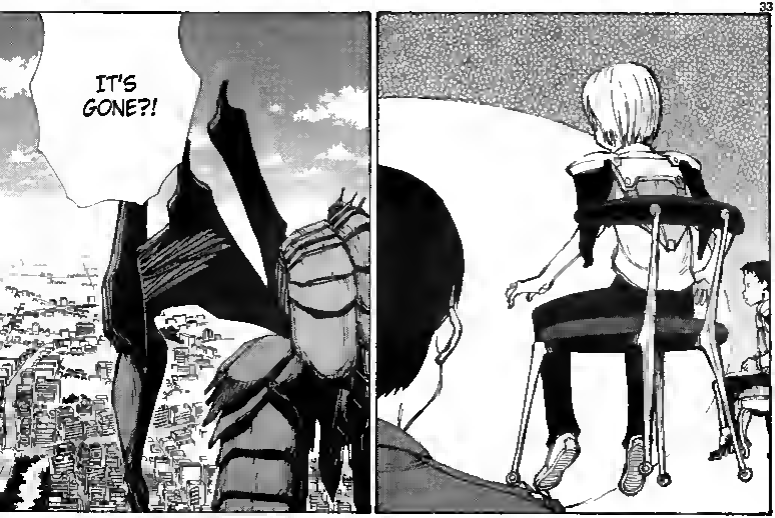
IT'S GONE?!

UP ABOVE!!
LOOK!

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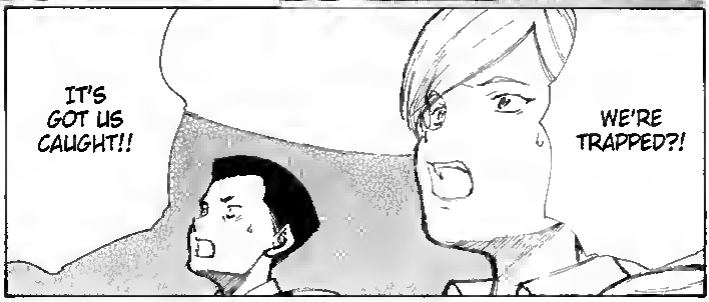

CHAPTER 22/END

Waku Takashi
(Waku)

Isao Kako
(Kako)

Daiichi Yamura
(Daichi)

Masaru Kodaka
(Kodama)

Kanji Yoshikawa
(Kanji)

Yasuhiko Meji
(Meji)

Jun Ushiro
(Ushiro)

Yosuke Kirie
(Kirie)

Nako Nakarai
(Nakarai)

Aiko Tokosumi
(Anko)

Yoko Machi
(Machi)

Chizuru Honda
(Chizu)

Takami Komoda
(Komo)

Maki Ano
(Maki)

Kana Ushiro
(Kana)

Dung Beetle

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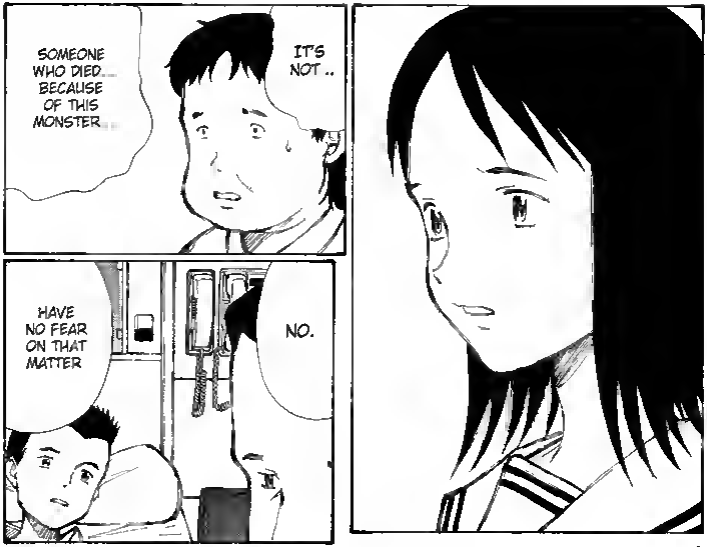
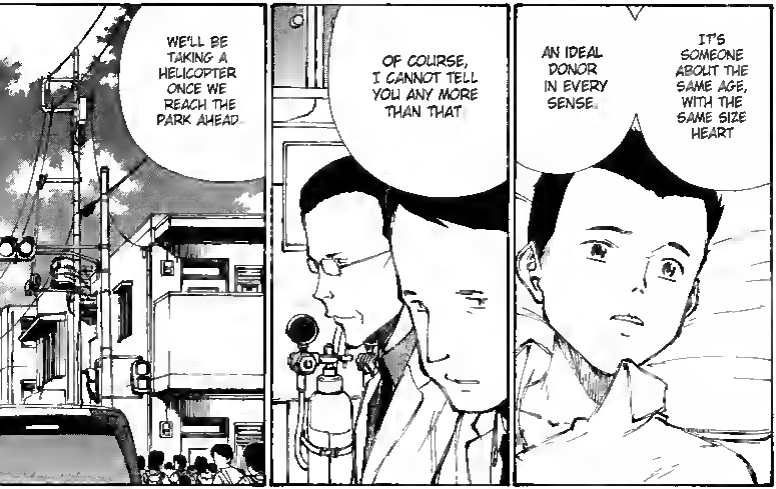
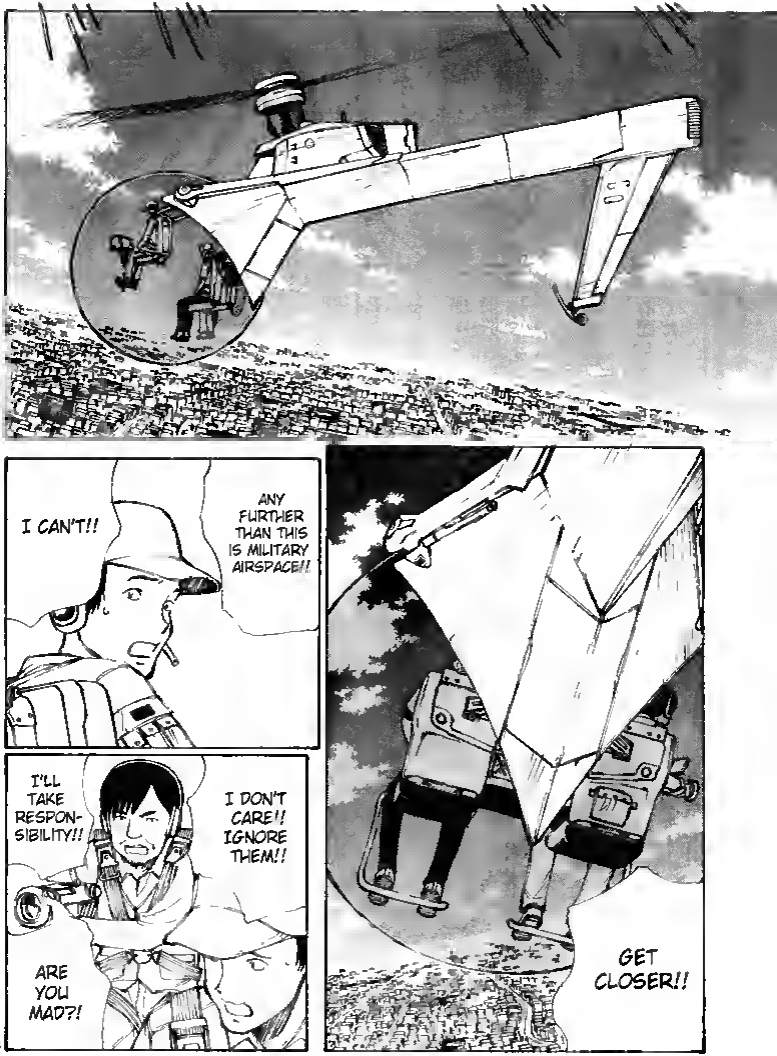
CHAPTER 23
KUNIHIKO MOJI (3)

鬼頭莫宏
Kito Mohiro

CLEAR THE WAY!!
MILITARY VEHICLE COMING THROUGH!!
WE'VE FOUND A DONOR.
WHAT'S GOING ON..
A FULL MATCH DONOR.


SOMEONE WHO DIED... BECAUSE OF THIS MONSTER...
IT'S NOT ..
HAVE NO FEAR ON THAT MATTER
NO.


WE'LL BE TAKING A HELICOPTER ONCE WE REACH THE PARK AHEAD.
OF COURSE, I CANNOT TELL YOU ANY MORE THAN THAT.
AN IDEAL DONOR IN EVERY SENSE.
IT'S SOMEONE ABOUT THE SAME AGE, WITH THE SAME SIZE HEART


I CAN'T!!
ANY FURTHER THAN THIS IS MILITARY AIRSPACE!!
I'LL TAKE RESPON-SIBILITY!!
I DON'T CARE!! IGNORE THEM!!
ARE YOU MAD?!
GET CLOSER!!

AT THE VERY LEAST, THEY MUST HAVE KNOWN IT WOULD APPEAR HERE
THE ARMY KNOWS SOMETHING...
BUT THEN WOULDN'T THEY HAVE EVACUATED THE CIVILIANS ALREADY!?
IT APPEARED PRACTICALLY IN MY OWN BACKYARD!
IF I DON'T FOLLOW THIS SCOOP, WHAT KIND OF NEWS CAMERAMAN AM I?!
YOU ARE ENTERING RESTRICTED AIRSPACE.
VEHICLE #1.
THAT'S A MILITARY CHOPPER!!
TURN AROUND AT ONCE.
MAYBE THERE'S A REASON THEY COULDN'T
I DON'T KNOW WHY
THIS IS CRAZY!!
I'LL TAKE THE BLAME!!
JUST KEEP GOING!!

THIS RIGHT IS GRANTED TO ME BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION AND
IF YOU DO NOT FOLLOW ORDERS, WE WILL REVOKE YOUR FLIGHT LICENSE.
IT SHOULDN'T BE THAT HARD TO LAND IN THIS KIND OF CHAOS, RIGHT?!
FINE! DROP ME OFF AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN GET!!
WHY NOT?!
YOU'RE STILL GUNG-HO ABOUT THIS?!
I'M TURNING AROUND, MAN!!
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING!!
AH! HEY!!

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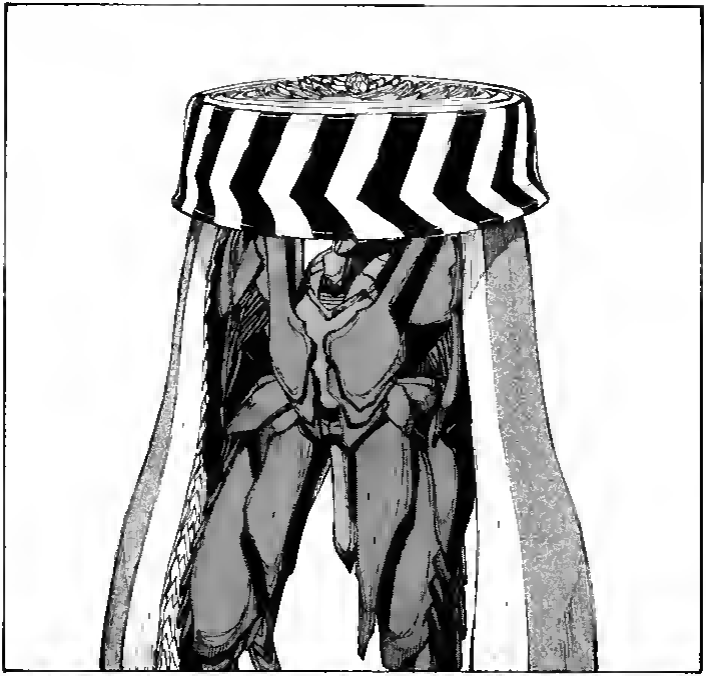

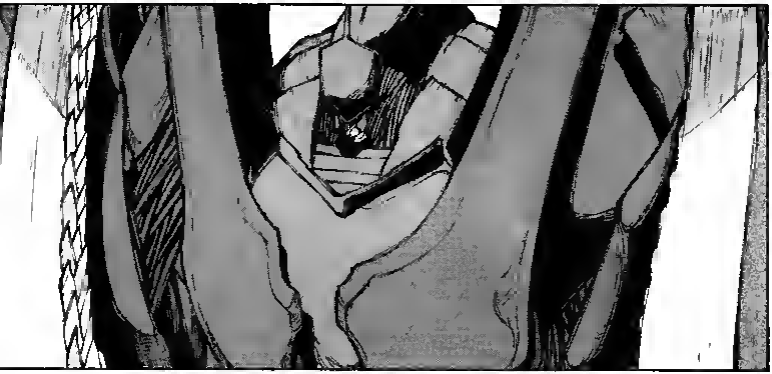

SQUEEZE OUT AND GET AWAY!!
I CAN'T
I CAN'T GET OUT.
WHAT'S IT
GOING TO DO TO HIS?

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WHAT'S THAT NOISE?!
WHAT THE?!
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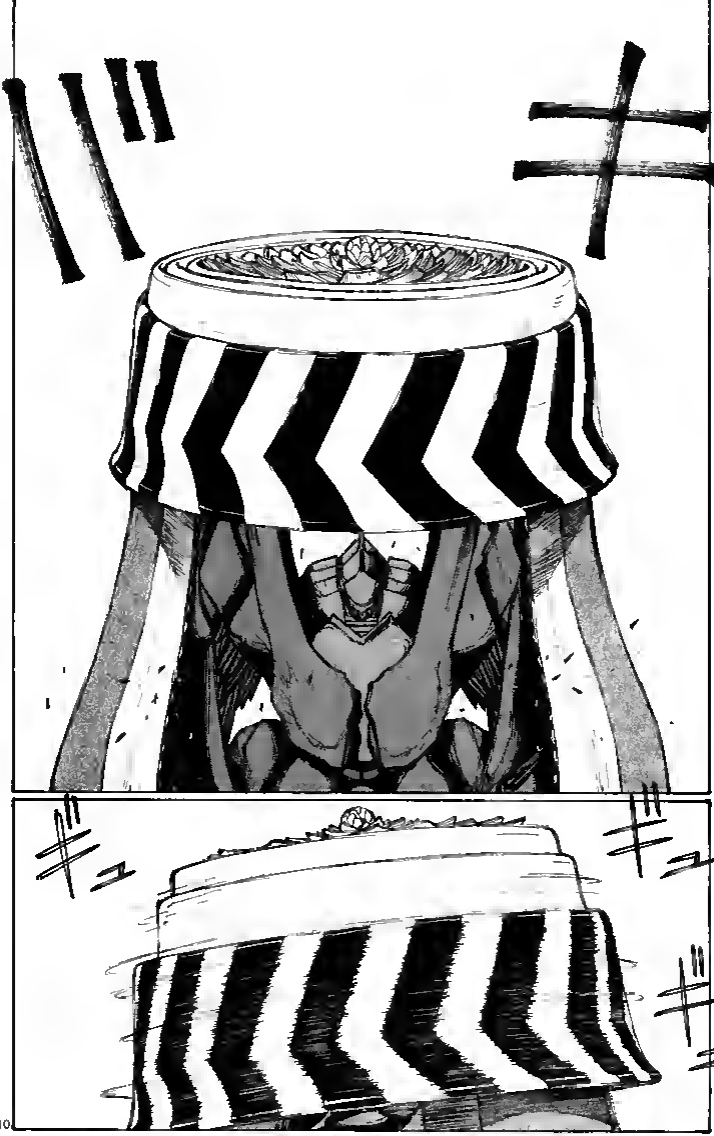

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JESUS!!
ギシ
IS IT GRINDING US DOWN?!
IT'LL PUSH THE LEGS INWARD...
NO WONDER. WHEN THE RING LOWERS,
THE RING-LIKE STRUCTURE ON THE TOP
IS APPARENTLY ROTATING AND MOVING DOWNWARD.
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I KNOW, MAN!!
IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING SOON-!
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ONE MORE TIME!!
IT DIDN'T WORK!!

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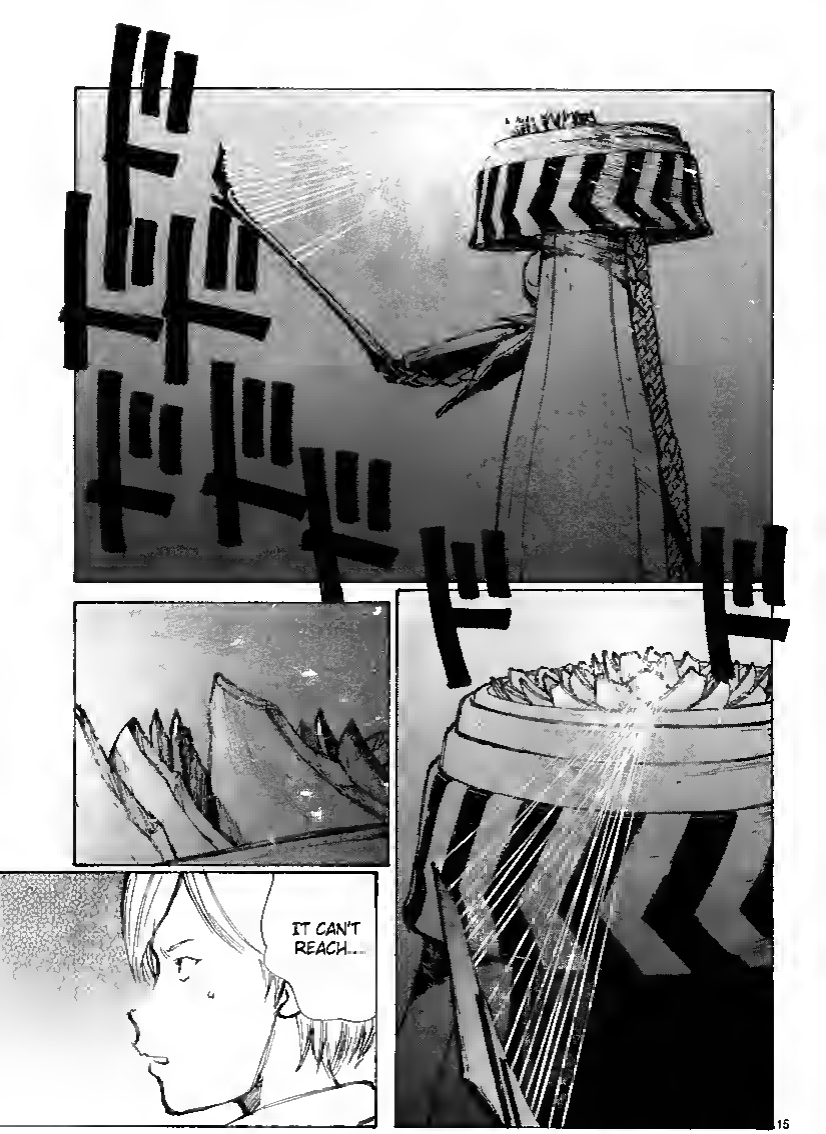
NO GOOD ..
THEN...
I CAN'T MOVE MY ARMS!!
RAISE THE ARMS AND...
I CAN'T!!
YOUR
FEET!!
は!?


IT CAN'T REACH...

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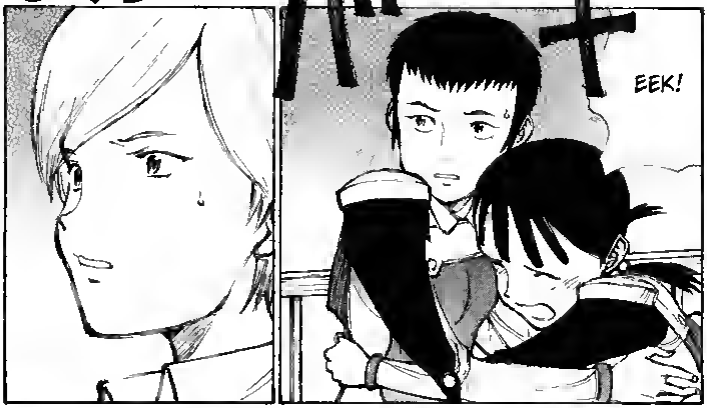
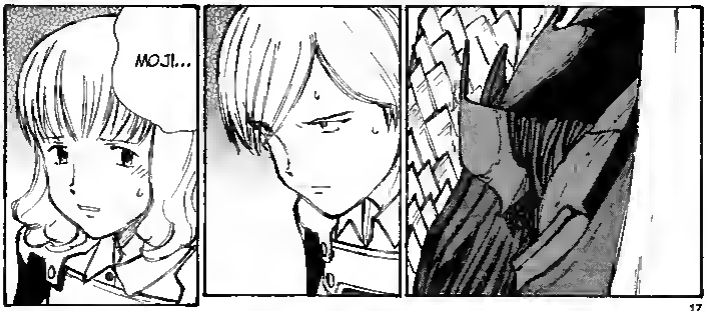
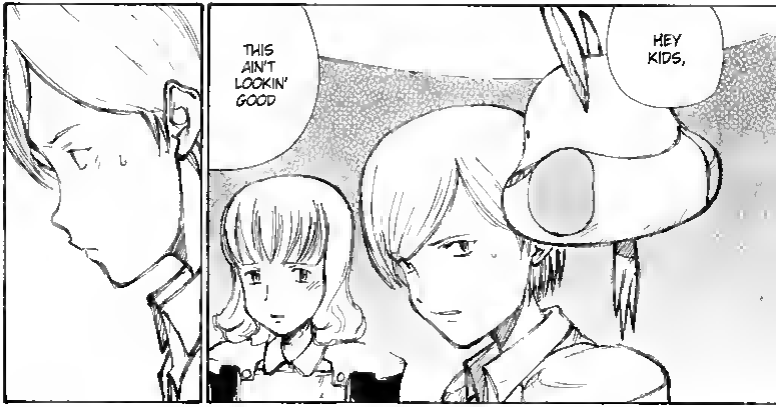
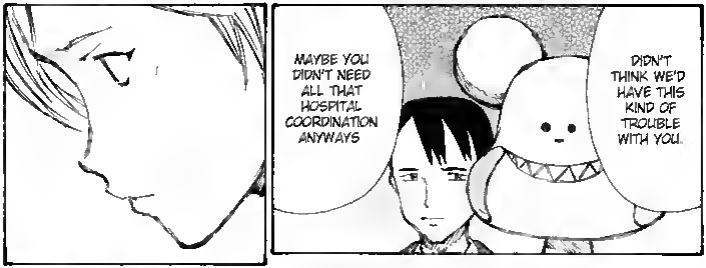
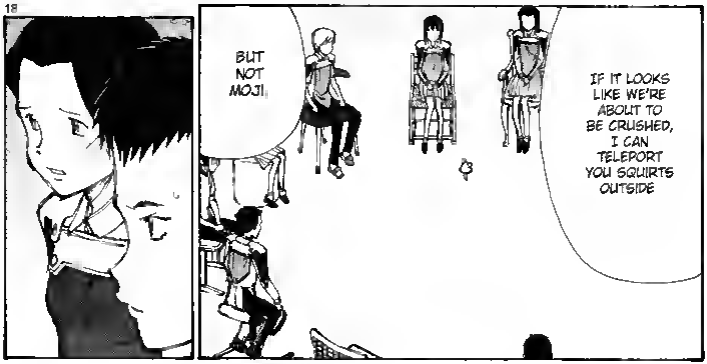

EEK!


MOJI...

I CAN'T GET AWAY...
I CAN'T.


THIS AIN'T LOOKIN' GOOD
HEY KIDS,


MAYBE YOU DIDN'T NEED ALL THAT HOSPITAL COORDINATION ANYWAYS
DIDN'T THINK WE'D HAVE THIS KIND OF TROUBLE WITH YOU.


BUT NOT MOJI.
IF IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ABOUT TO BE CRUSHED, I CAN TELEPORT YOU SQUIRTS OUTSIDE

WHERE YOU SPEND YOUR LAST MOMENTS ALIVE
OF COURSE, IN THAT CASE IT WOULD ONLY CHANGE
THIS PLANET'LL BLOW.
BECAUSE EITHER WAY,
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DIDN'T YOU LEARN A THING LAST TIME?
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT
LET'S ASK FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE
THERE WON'T EVEN BE AN ARMY IF ZEARTH LOSES.
THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR THAT KIND OF ARGUMENT.
THIS IS SEKI, IN ZEARTH
DON'T YOU THINK WE MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE, SINCE THEIR VITAL AREA IS EXPOSED LIKE THAT?

WITH LITTLE TO NO CHANCE TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK
AS YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED, ZEARTH IS IN AN EXTREMELY DISADVANTAGEOUS POSITION,
REQUESTING A BACKUP ATTACK.
ON THE HEAD REGION OF THE ENEMY.
I'D LIKE TO REQUEST A PINPOINT ATTACK

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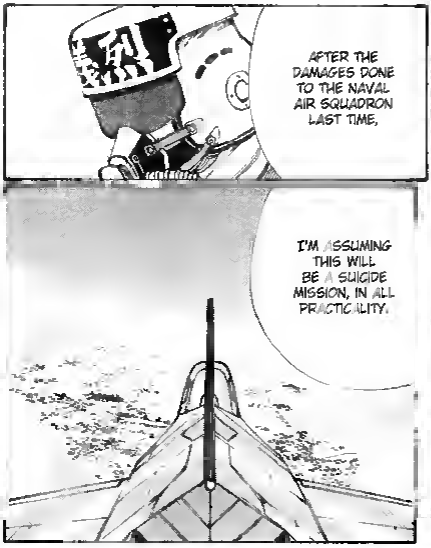
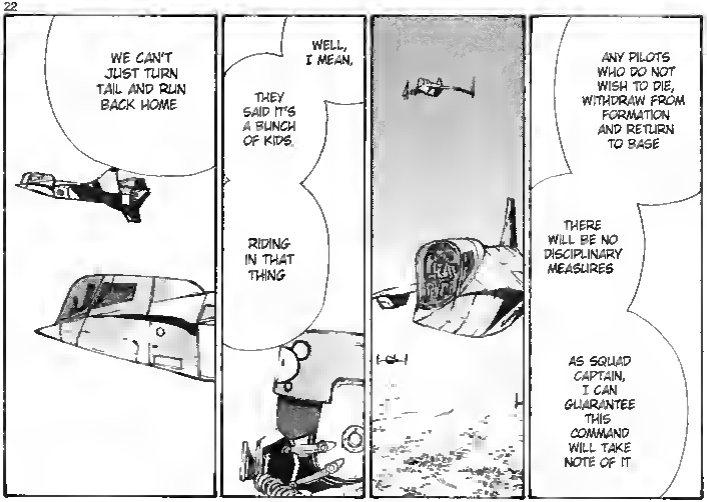
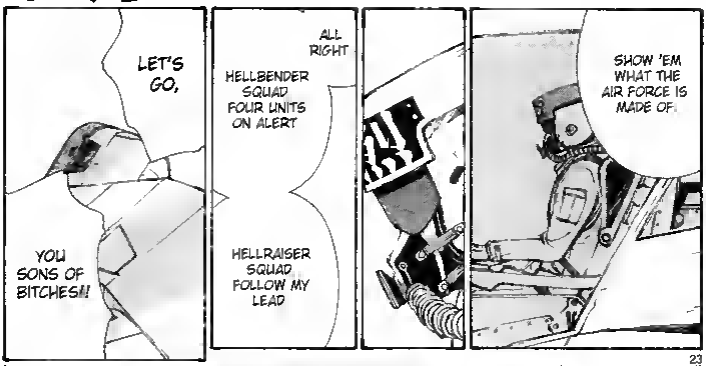
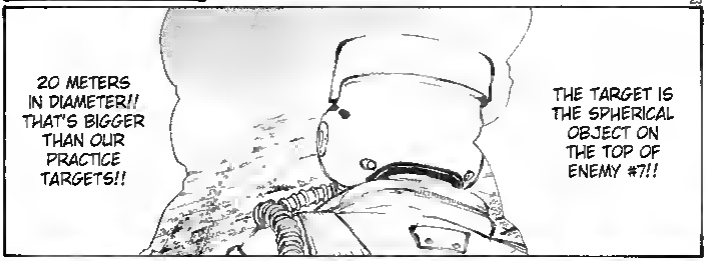
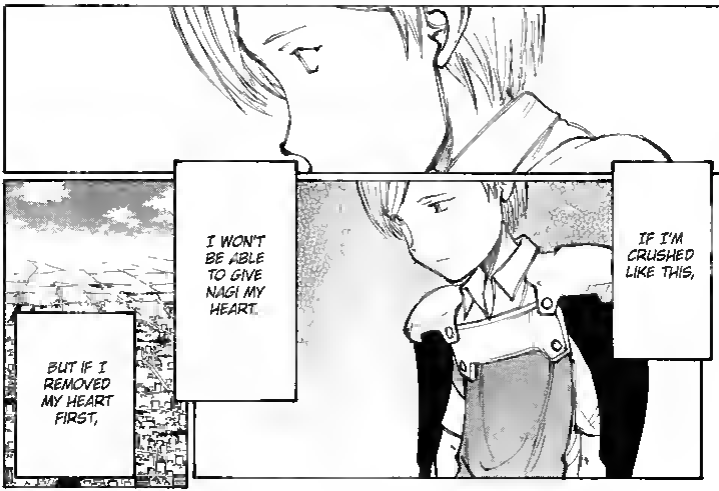
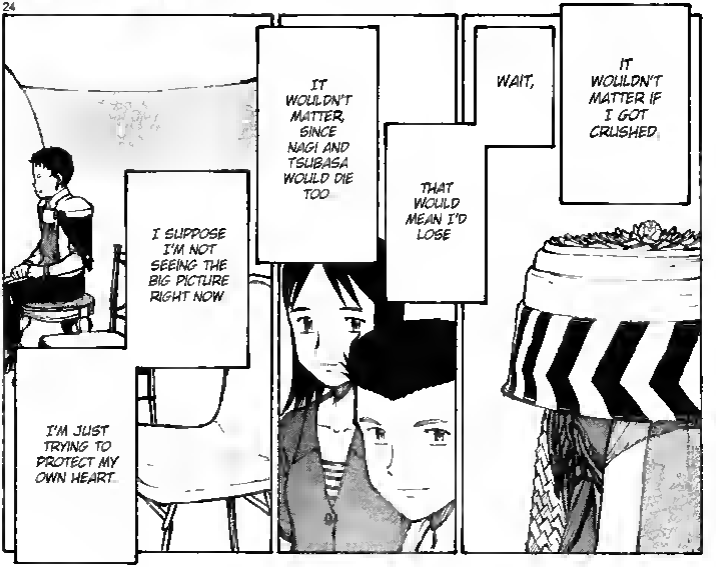

AFTER THE DAMAGES DONE TO THE NAVAL AIR SQUADRON LAST TIME,
I'M ASSUMING THIS WILL BE A SUICIDE MISSION, IN ALL PRACTICALITY.
ATTACK SQUADRON HEADING IN FOR SUPPORT OF THE BLACK MONSTER, CODENAMED "ZEARTH."


WE CAN'T JUST TURN TAIL AND RUN BACK HOME
WELL, I MEAN,
THEY SAID IT'S A BUNCH OF KIDS.
RIDING IN THAT THING
ANY PILOTS WHO DO NOT WISH TO DIE, WITHDRAW FROM FORMATION AND RETURN TO BASE
THERE WILL BE NO DISCIPLINARY MEASURES
AS SQUAD CAPTAIN, I CAN GUARANTEE THIS COMMAND WILL TAKE NOTE OF IT

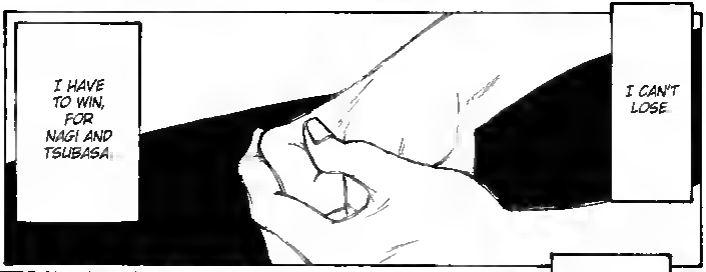

LET'S GO,
YOU SONS OF BITCHES!!
ALL RIGHT
HELLBENDER SQUAD FOUR UNITS ON ALERT
HELLRAISER SQUAD FOLLOW MY LEAD
SHOW 'EM WHAT THE AIR FORCE IS MADE OF.

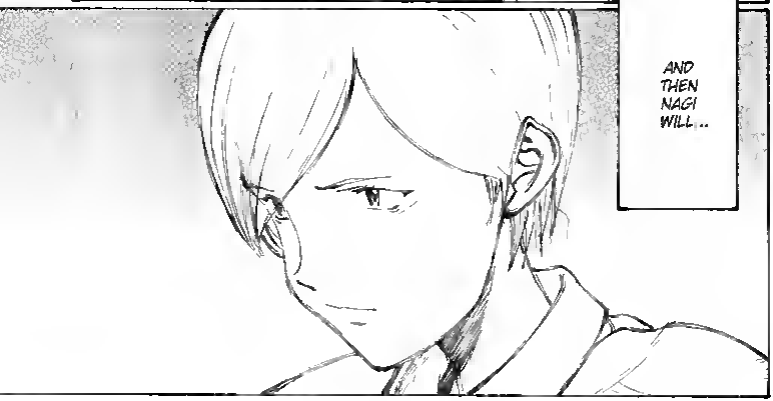

20 METERS IN DIAMETER!! THAT'S BIGGER THAN OUR PRACTICE TARGETS!!
THE TARGET IS THE SPHERICAL OBJECT ON THE TOP OF ENEMY #7!!

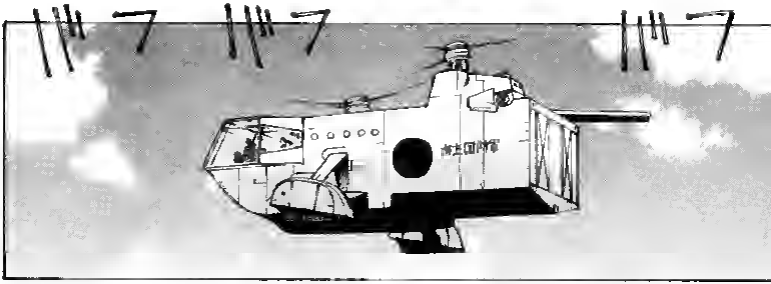

IF I'M CRUSHED LIKE THIS,
I WON'T BE ABLE TO GIVE NAGI MY HEART.
BUT IF I REMOVED MY HEART FIRST,

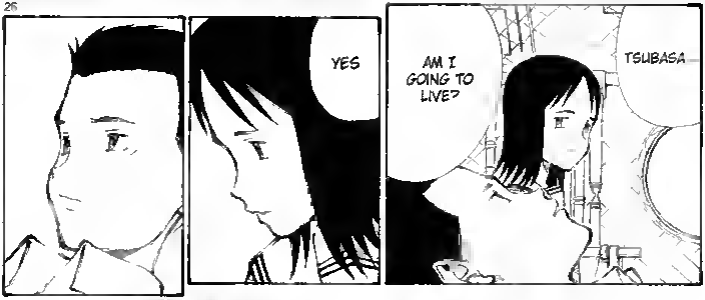

IT WOULDN'T MATTER IF I GOT CRUSHED.
WAIT,
IT WOULDN'T MATTER, SINCE NAGI AND TSUBASA WOULD DIE TOO.
THAT WOULD MEAN I'D LOSE
I SUPPOSE I'M NOT SEEING THE BIG PICTURE RIGHT NOW.
I'M JUST TRYING TO PROTECT MY OWN HEART.

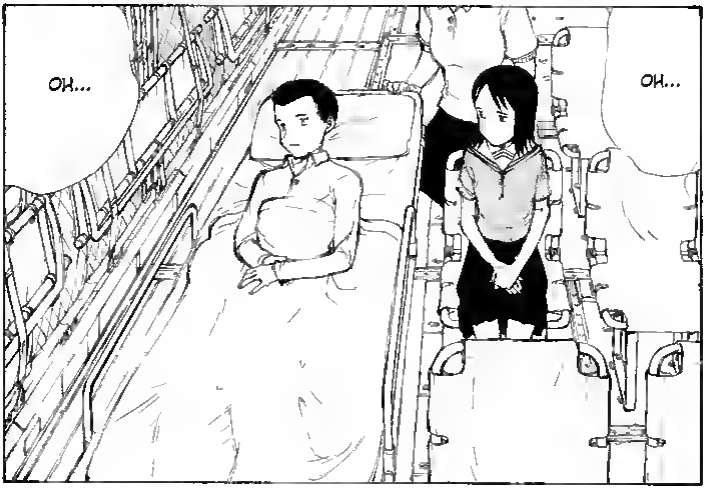
I GUESS
THERE'S NO ROOM FOR THINKING NORMALLY
I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING


I CAN'T LOSE
I HAVE TO WIN, FOR NAGI AND TSUBASA

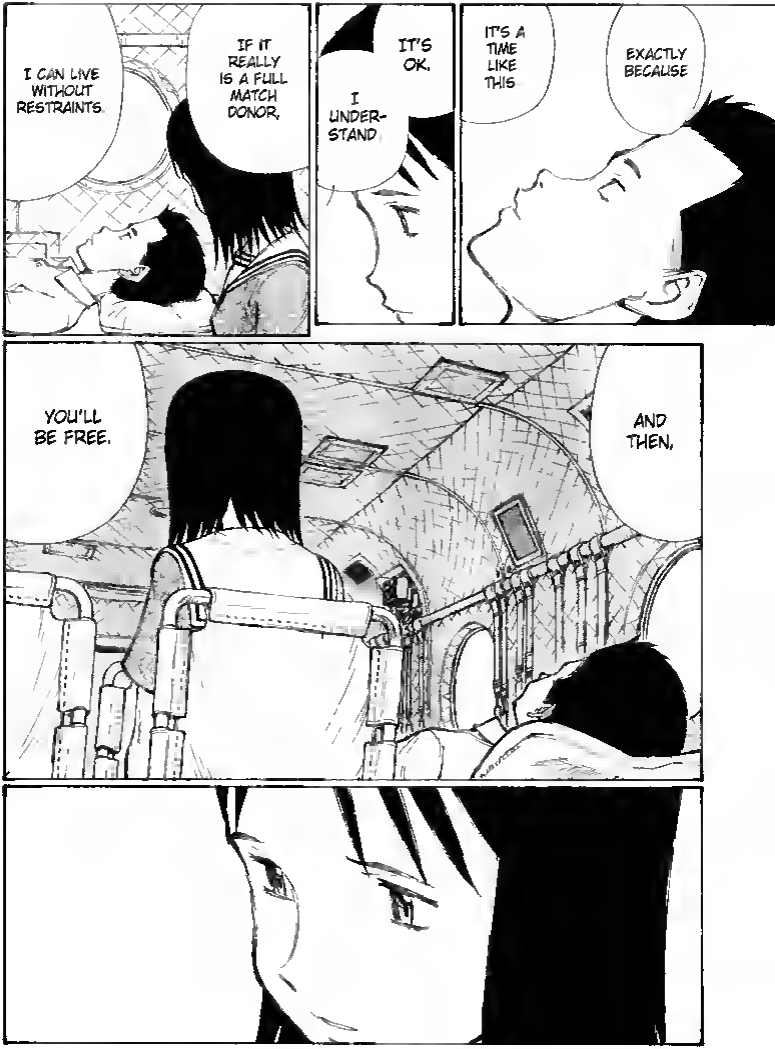

AND THEN NAGI WILL...

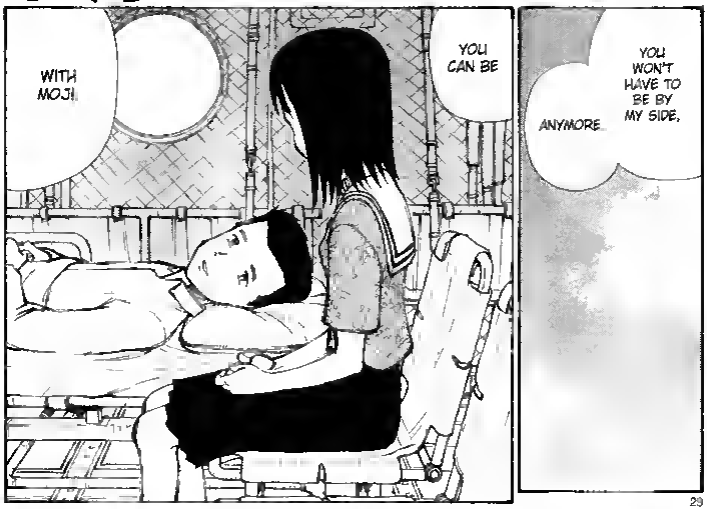


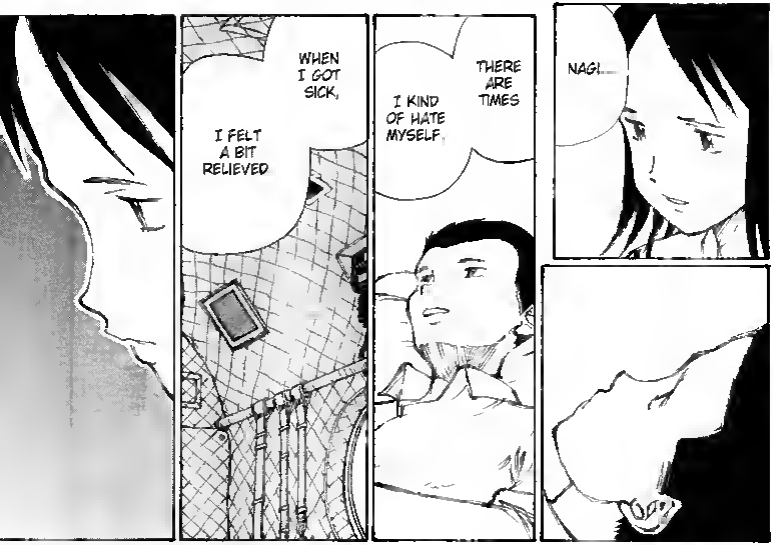

YES
AM I GOING TO LIVE?
TSUBASA

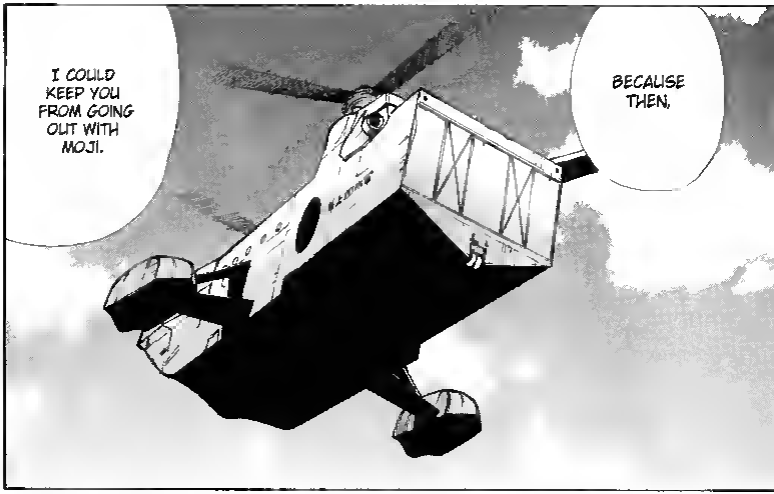

OH...
OH...

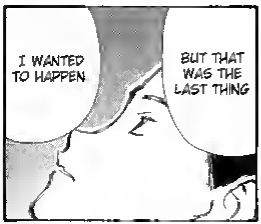
TELL ME THE TRUTH.
WHAT?
HEY TSUBASA.
DON'T YOU?
YOU LOVE MOJI, TSU-BASA,
HOW CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THAT, AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
NO. NOT IN THAT WAY.
YES, I DO.

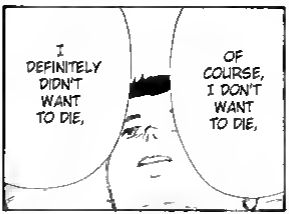

I CAN LIVE WITHOUT RESTRAINTS.
IF IT REALLY IS A FULL MATCH DONOR,
IT'S OK.
I UNDER-STAND
IT'S A TIME LIKE THIS
EXACTLY BECAUSE
YOU'LL BE FREE.
AND THEN,


WITH MOJI.
YOU CAN BE
YOU WON'T HAVE TO BE BY MY SIDE,
ANYMORE.


WHEN I GOT SICK,
I FELT A BIT RELIEVED
THERE ARE TIMES
I KIND OF HATE MYSELF.
NAGI...


I COULD KEEP YOU FROM GOING OUT WITH MOJI.
BECAUSE THEN,


I WANTED TO HAPPEN.
BUT THAT WAS THE LAST THING


I DEFINITELY DIDN'T WANT TO DIE,
OF COURSE, I DON'T WANT TO DIE,

WHEN YOU TOLD ME NOT TO WORRY,
I THOUGHT. .

YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T GO OUT WITH HIM
AND IF I HAPPENED TO DIE OF THE SICKNESS,

OF MY BEST FRIEND.
SOME KIND OF PUNISHMENT FOR BEING JEALOUS,
THIS IS PROBABLY,
AND THEN,
I'LL BE HEALTHY AGAIN.
TO YOU TWO.
I CAN GIVE MY BLESSINGS

CHAPTER 23/END